

CHERA KINGDOM and CHERAS OF YORE

Navalar-Kanakkayar

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Preface

In a decadent society as if by divine intervention—great men appear who revive and rejuvenate the life of the Society, reform and rebuild the community and raise and reinforce the dreams and hopes of the people. Such a one was Navalar - Kanakkayar - Doctor S. Somasundara Bharathiar. Some men toil for the nation, some for the community and some for the language. Amongst those who rendered service in all three fields stands Professor Bharathiar.

In addition to number of original works and research articles in Tamil, Dr. Bharathiar had published a few works in English also which have considerably helped in high lighting the Dravidian languages and culture to hitherto unfamiliar populations.

'System of succession in the Chera Kingdom' and 'Some Studies about the Cheras of Yore' are the research papers which were published in 1929 and 1937 respectively. Now these have been gathered together and has now been brought out in one volume.

After the demise of Dr. Bharathiar, in 1959, an Educational Charity Trust has been constituted in his memory which has on its objectives the noble aim of publishing all his works, and of using the profits to help needy students of Tamil. This task has been undertaken on approval of the above Trust. Our acknowledgements are due to Thiru S. Lakshmirathan Bharathi, M.A., B.L., the Managing Trustee, and the other members of the Trust. We also thank Thiru S. Sambasivanar M.A., who edited these articles.

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System of Succession in the **CHERA KINGDOM**

I

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

1. We find the institution called Marumakalthayam, *i.e.* succession in the female line, in vogue in the West Coast now for over 5 centuries at least. Not only is it in operation among the Nayars, but also among the Ammu-
van Nambudri Brahmins of Poyyanur in British Malabar, the Ambalavasis and Nanchinad Vellalas of Travancore, and even the Mohommedan Moplas of North Malabar, and the Bants and the Tulus in South Canara. All these folks in the Kerala seaboard observe the Marumakalthayam *i. e.* devolution of property to heirs in the female

line. Many foreign writers like Barbosa have noted and recorded this custom as peculiar to the provinces west of the Ghats. Sonnerat says in his *Voyage to the East Indies* (1774 - 1781) as follows:

“These Brahmans do not marry, but have the privilege of enjoying all the Nairresses. The following right is established by the customs of the country. A woman without shame may abandon herself to all men, who are not of an inferior caste to her own, *because the children do not belong to the father, but to the mother's brother they become his legitimate heirs at their birth, even of the crown if he is king.*”

We all know this institution to exist; but we believe that this is an incongruous exotic accrescence, somehow resulting from the medieval convulsions in the Kerala country.

2. (a) We assume the Chera country was part of Tamilaham, and the Chera kings of yore followed only the Makkalthayam just as their other contemporary Tamil monarchs (the Pandyas and the Cholas) did; and we think the Marumakkalthayam is an exotic and alien institution introduced in the Kerala country in the comparatively modern epochs, in any event long after the age of the Sangam Classics.

(b) This common notion of ours receives further countenance by a tradition in the West Coast that Parasurama ordained many new and strange local customs and conventions on the people who colonised the Kerala country at his invitation and under his aegis.

(c) It is further reinforced by a belief that none of the old Tamil Classics that refer to the Chera kings and their country affords any countenance to any such customs and institutions there in the classical times, which therefore must have come into existence only after the age of these Sangam Classics.

3. The question naturally arises therefore as to whether this matriarchal family system is a comparatively modern post-Sangam importation in the West Coast, or whether there is any evidence of its existence even in the Sangam age in any of the old Tamil Classics. It should thus be of especial interest to research students to rummage these old Tamil poems. A critical study of some of the Sangam collections having special reference to the Cheras would thus amply repay all the pains bestowed on them. And to my mind a deeper and closer scrutiny of some of them seems to reveal unmistakable testimony to the existence and prevalence of just this very Marumakkalathayam system as much in the old Chera dynasties, as it has since been long in continued vogue in all the old ruling houses in the West Coast such as those of the Perumals, the Zamorins, the Cochin Chiefs and the Travancore Kings.



INCIDENTS OF MARUMAKKALTHAYAM

It is necessary to clarify the issues and to grasp the central facts of the Marumakkalthayam Law before plunging into a polemical exegesis of the Sangam Classics. The essentials which form the backbone of this system are these: *Viz*,

(1) Kinship is traced through females; maternity and not paternity counts to reckon the family relationship. People call themselves kindred, not because they are descendants of a common father, but because of a common mother or ancestress.

(2) Heirship to property is in the female line. Nephews and not sons succeed to the estate. All the sons

of all the sisters succeed in the order of their seniority, whether to the Karnavanship of the Tarwads or to the Crown of the kingdoms; and similarly thereafter do the sons of sisters' daughters.

(3) The same order of seniority is ever enforced with rigour and uniformity among all the heirs in the same lines among brothers and cousins. This is what obtains alike in the case of succession to the thrones as well as to the coveted Karnavanship in the families or tarwads, which consist of all kinsfolks counting descent from some common ancestress in the female line.

(4) Men are thus heirs to their uncles and all maternal relatives, and not to their agnates.

Keeping these salient factors in view, we will now set out to investigate the evidence available from the Tamil Classics.



EVIDENCES FROM THE SANGAM CLASSICS

Let us therefore first look into Pathitru-pathu, the ten-ten idylls, that sing of ten great Chera potentates of the Sangam age. It contained 10 cantos composed by ten respective bards, each consisting of ten idylls and concluded by an epilogue called Pathikam. Every Pathikam is uniformly a synopsis of the pedigree as well as of the heraldrics and the achievements and laurels of the hero eulogised in the ten preceding idylls of each canto. As such, these Pathikam verses are of primary importance for purposes of our research. We have in the extant book only 8 out of 10 cantos preserved from the ravages of time and assaults of age-long changes in Tamilaham: and the pertinent portions of these Pathikams bearing on the pedigree

of the Chera heroes commemorated in the respective cantos read as follows:

(i) 2nd canto Epilogue.....Lines2 and 3.

“இன்னிசை முரசின் உதியஞ் சேரற்கு
வெளியன் வேண்மாள் நல்லினி யின்றமகன்”

“To Uthiyam Seran, son born of Velian’s Ven-
mal, Nallini..... is Imayavaramban Nedun-
cheral Athian,” the hero of this canto, sung by
the poet Kumattur Kannanar.

(ii) 3rd canto epilogue.....Line 1.

“இமைய வரம்பன் தம்பி.....”

“Imayavaramban’s brother..... is Palyanai
Chelkezhū Kuttuvan,”-the hero of this canto,
sung by the poet, Palai Kouthamanar.

(iii) 4th canto Lines 1 to 3 .

“ஆராத் திருவிற் சேர லாதற்கு
வேள் ஆவிக் கோமான்
பதுமன் நேவி யின்ற மகன்”

“To Cheralathan of great prosperity, son
born of Vel. Avikoman Paduman’s Devi.....
is Kalangai kanni Narmudicheral”-the hero of
these poems,sung by Kappiyatru Kappiyanar.

(iv) 5th canto.....Lines 2 and 3.

“வடவ ருட்கும் வான்ரேய் வெல்கொடிக்
குடவர் கோமான் நெடுஞ்சேர லாதற்குச்
சோழன் மணக்கிள்ளி யின்றமகன்”

“To Neduncheralathan, king of Kudavars,
son born of Cholan Manakilli.....is Chen-

guttuvan'' -the hero of this piece, sung by the poet Paranar.

(v) 6th canto..... Lines 1 and 2.

''குடக்கோ நெடுஞ்சேர லாதற்கு வேளன்
ஆவிக் கோமான் தேவி யின்றமகன்''

'To Neduncheralathan, King of the West, son born of Vel Avikoman's Devi..... is Adu-
kotpattu Cheralathan''-the hero of this piece,
sung by the poetess Nachellyar.

(vi) 7th canto..... ..Lines 2 and 3.

''மடியா வுள்ளமொடு மாற்குர்ப் பிணித்த
நெடுநுண் கேள்வி யத்துவற் கொருதந்தை
யின்றமகன் பொறையன்பெருந்தேவி
யின்றமகன்''

''To Anthuvan, of acute discernment, who
by resolute courage conquered his foes,
son born of the daughter of the same (An-
thuvan's) father—(who is) Porayan's great
Devi,.....is Chelva Kadungo,''-the hero of
this canto, sung by the poet Kapilar.

(vii) 8th cantoLines 1 and 2.

''பொய்யில் செல்வக் கடுங்கோ வுக்கு
வேளாவிக் கோமான் பதுமனதேவி யின்ற
மகன்''

''To Chelva Kadungo of unfailing truth,
son born of Vel Avikoman Paduman's
Devi.....is Peruncheral Irumborai''
.....the hero of this piece, composed
by Arusi Kizhar.

(viii) 9th canto..... Lines 1 and 2.

“குட்டுவ னிரும்பொறைக்கு மையூர்கிழாஅன்
வேண்மாள் அந்துவஞ்செள்ளை யின்றமகன்”

“To Kuttuvan Irumborai, son born of Myyur
Kizhan’s Venmal, Anthuvan Chellai.....
is Ilamcherai Irumborai,” :the hero of
this canto, sung by Perumkovur Kizhar.

Of these eight cantos, six expressly refer to the hero of each of the piece to be a son borne by a princess to her own consort, but as heir to the hero’s predecessor on the Chera throne; the seventh (that is, the 3rd canto epilogue) virtually says the same thing. For, the hero of that canto is said to be the brother of that of the previous [second] canto, who is mentioned as the son of a princess named Nallini. There is some misgiving or mistake only about one of these eight *i.e.*, the 5th canto epilogue, whose language seems to have been hitherto misunderstood. These lines deserve closer scrutiny and more careful study than were given to them so far. Let us therefore scan them more deliberately and see the results.

1. Epilogues of the 4th, 6th and 8th Cantos Examined:

(a) First the word used in the 4th, 6th and 8th canto-pathikams is “Devi” [தேவி]. This word has hitherto been uncritically taken to mean a daughter instead of a wife. In the first place this word ‘Devi’ can never denote or connote a daughter in Tamil. All lexicons or Nikandus speak of it only as a name for a

wife or goddess Durga; and nowhere is a daughter's name mentioned as one of the synonyms of the word Devi.

(b) Again this word 'Devi' is also used in the 7th canto in the same context. There the language admits of no possible doubt as to its meaning. For, the hero's mother is said to be Devi of Porayan and daughter to one who was father alike to her as also to King Anduvan. 'அந்துவற்கு ஒரு தந்தை ஈன்ற மகள், பொறையன் பெருந்தேவி' is the language of this epilogue. Here the word Devi is definitely used in contradistinction to the word 'mahal' (மகள்-daughter). Its import therefore, is unmistakably clear. The postscripts or Pathikams for all the cantos are believed rightly to have been composed by one and the same author. The word Devi is used in 4 out of 8 available Pathikams, all in the same context and must therefore have the same meaning in all. And the epilogue to the 7th canto leaves no other alternative than to take this word Devi to mean a wife. For, it expressly says that Kadungo's mother is Anduvan's father's (ஒரு தந்தை) daughter and Porayan's wife, [தேவி]. The author of the old standard commentary to Pathitirupathu as well as its erudite editor Mahamahopadhyaya Swaminatha Iyer both take this word Devi here to mean only a wife. It is thus crystal clear that Devi stands in the Pathikams 4, 6 and 8 to denote just what it does indisputably in the 7th, viz, a wife.

Therefore we are now on sure ground that the word Devi in the Pathikams of the 4th, 6th & 8th canto, taken in its normal and natural significance, can mean only a wife and not a daughter of Vel Avikoman. Vel Aviko-

man's wife could not have borne the hero of the piece to any other than her husband in honour; and if such wedded wife bore a son in dishonour in illegitimate intimacy with even a reigning Chera king, it is not a matter for a poet to eulogise or commemorate in a prize-poem.

(c) In such situations, there is no need for the poet either to refer to the mean birth of the hero, or expressly mention his mother's husband's name and to refer to his mother merely as that husband's Devi or wife.

(d) The significant fact to be noted in all these quotations is that every one of these Pathikams mentions the hero's mother's husband's name, and says that husband's wife (Devi) bore the hero as a son (mahan) to a Chera king, also named at the beginning of each of the Pathikams. We will do well to reserve the further inquiry about the use and significance of the word mahan (மகன்-son) in these Pathikams till after we finish the discussion of the rest of the epilogue-references in this connection.

(e) It is next to be noted that the mother of the heroes of the 4th, 6th & 8th cantos appears to be only one and the same princess, the Devi or wife of Vel Avikoman. If the word Devi here were to mean a daughter as hitherto assumed gratuitously, and if the princess referred to were taken only as a daughter of the prince Avi and a wife of the Chera kings named in these Pathikams, then it would lead to absurdities. For, such a supposition would inexorably entail the irresistible but ignoble sequence, viz, the

same princess figured as an honourable queen of two different crowned Hindu Monarchs in the Cherakingdom. Nothing would be more improbable than that a Hindu princess should openly consort with two different kings; and it would be most improbable of all that three Hindu poets, of whom one is an honoured poetess famous for her fidelity to her wedded lord, should think it fit to glorify this Princess' polyandry or loose and easy virtue in their immortal poems, and her sons who are lionised in these prize-poems should have felt flattered thereby so far as to lavishly reward the authors for this vulgar reference to themselves and to their royal mother.

The absurdity would be further heightened if we remember that the word *Devi* could only mean as it ever does in Tamil, a wife and not a daughter. For, then we find that this princess is mentioned in all the three Pathikams as the *Devi* or wedded wife of the prince *Avi*; And to say that she should be openly mentioned by all the three bards as adultuerously consorting with two Chera kings is to disbelieve it as too monstrously stupid a hypothesis to deserve any further consideration at our hands.

As a result of this discussion we find that the language of these three Pathikams makes it unmistakably clear that the three Chera heroes respectively commemorated in the 4th, 6th, & 8th cantos are only heirs to the two Chera kings *Athan* and *Kadungo*, but are not their sons as hitherto believed, and that they are the sons of the prince *Avi* by his wedded princess, who must be a sister or in loco sororis to those Chera Kings.

2. Elucidation of the Epilogues of the 2th & 9th Cantos :

(a) Let us next turn to look into the other epilogues, and see if they refer to any Chera heroes as sons and heirs of kings. The second and ninth canto Pathikams speak of their heroes as the sons of two princesses named respectively as Venmal Nallini and Venmal Anduvamchellai. Obviously the word Venmal is not a personal or proper name, and should only mean something common to the two princesses and perhaps to others as well. For, 'Venmal' is in Tamil literature of very common occurrence in reference to many a queen and princess. It corresponds to its masculine correlative Venman, which always means only a prince or chieftain of the Velir Class. Evidently in our context this word Venmal means only a royal or princely wife.

(b) King Chenguttuvan's queen is referred to in the epic of Kovalan merely as Venmal. It was hitherto mistakenly assumed to be the queen's proper name. In its context in Chilappathikaram, it simply means the queen, and nothing more. For the lines read as follows :

“வானவர் தோன்றல், வாய்வாட் கோதை,
விளங்கு இலவந்தி வெள்ளி மாடத்
திளங்கோ வேண்மாள் உடனிருந் தருளி”

ChNap, Katshi-kathai,

These lines in their English rendering would only mean—The celestial king, the sharp-sabered Chera waa sitting in state in the silver mansion with the fountain

in company with the Yuvaraj (Junior Prince) and the Venmal (princess or queen).

In the same canto lower down, she is again referred to by the poet only as “மாபெருந்தேவி” the great queen. In another canto he again speaks of her merely as Venmal. The author is only the queen's brother-in-law, being Ilango, the Yuvaraj or the junior brother of the King. Convention and courtesy alike would not permit the prince to speak of the queen, his sister-in-law, by name. He would therefore simply call her the queen or the royal wife of the king. It may thus be safely assumed that Venmal is no proper name of the queen for this very reason that Ilango refers to her in the poem by that name, even were there no other. In truth Venmal and Maperum-Devi are both used in the poem as interchangeable or equivalent terms in reference to king Chenguttuvan's queen by the king's own younger brother; and they both must therefore have the same meaning. The import of Maperum-Devi is obvious. It only means the great exalted queen. And Venmal also means here only the princess or the queen.

(c) This view is greatly strengthened further by the context. Neither the king, nor his brother are mentioned here by name. They are both referred to only as Kothai or the celestial Chera king, and as Ilango or the junior prince. There is thus no reason why the queen alone need be called here by name, while even the king and his brother, who may with less offence to convention be named, are not.

(d) Again there are other uses of this term Venmal in other contexts in Classics, which further reinforces this

view of its import. We meet with attributes such as Nannan Venmal, Uthiyan Venmal, etc., in old poems. Nannan and Uthiyan are obvious names of princes or chiefs of the Velir class. If Venmal were a proper name as is assumed by the commentators and editors of Chilappadikaram, these phrases would be meaningless nonsense. Neither Nannan nor Uthiyan could be a woman with the proper name of Venmal. Venmal in these phrases therefore must only mean a woman in some relation to the princes respectively called Nannan and Uthiyan. We know Velir chiefs are often known as Venmans, which only means princes. Therefore Venmal must here only mean the princess or wife of the respective chiefs, Nannan and Uthiyan. And it cannot mean a daughter; for Ilango, who calls his royal brother's queen 'Venmal', would not have used this term to denote a wife if it meant a daughter. It is thus abundantly clear that Venmal means and could mean only a wife.

(e) In the same manner and for the same reason the word 'Venmal' in the postscript to cantos 2 and 9 of Pathitrupathu must mean only a princess or royal wife. For, here also we find the word coupled with names of masculine gender. The mother of Imayavaramban in the tag to the second canto is called Veliyan Venmal, and the mother of Irumborai in the appendix to the 9th canto is similarly referred to as Myyur Kizhan Venmal. Their respective proper names Nallini and Arduvamchellai are also given in these appendices in addition to these descriptive attributes; and this fact further proves that 'Venmal' is not a proper name, but only a common noun meaning a wife of a chief or a king.

(f) Mahamahopadyaya Swaminatha Iyer also notes in his glossary to Pathitrupathu that 'Vanman' means a petty prince, and 'Venmal' denotes a wife of a prince or king. He gives the words no other meanings. This tends to confirm the view herein contented for.

(g) The references in these Pathikams of cantos 2 & 9 thus stand self-revealed in the light of the above discussions. They are now crystal-clear. Nedum Cheral Athan-the hero of the second canto-was, the Pathikam says, the son of Nallini, the princely wife of Velian (the Velir chief) born as the heir to the Chera king Uthiyancherai Athan. Similarly, according to the Pathikam to the 9th canto, king Ilamcherai Irumborai was the hero, whom Anduvan Chellai, the wife of Myyur Kizhan or the chief of Myyur, bore as a son to her husband, but as a heir to the Chera king known as Kuttuvan Irumborai.

(h) The considered note of Mahamahopadhyaya Swaminathair on the name Kuttuvan Irumborai, added to his glossary of the second edition to Pathitrupathu, is also very significant and clinches this point. He deliberately mentions there that Kuttuvan Irumborai was the uncle (maman) of Ilamcherai Irumborai. The erudite Mahamahopadyaya would have called him only 'Pitha' [father] and not 'maman' as he has done in his gloss on the word [ஓருதந்தை] Oruthandhai, if only the context would admit of such interpretation. As it is, this note of the premier pandit in modern Tamilaham only reinforces the inevitable deduction even otherwise inexorably entailed by the language and context of these epilogues.

3. Epilogue of the 3rd Canto:

There only remains now the Pathikams of Cantos 3, 5 and 7 to examine. That of the third presents no problem to solve. It simply says that the hero of the third canto, Palyanai Chelkezhukuttuvan, is the brother of Imayavaramban Nedum Cheral Athan, the hero of the 2nd canto. Chelkezhukuttuvan is thus the son and heir to the same persons as those to whom his brother Imaya Varamban was son and heir. This epilogue therefore serves only to reinforce the reference in the second Pathikam, which we have already discussed above.

4. Epilogue of the 7th Canto Examined:

The postscript of the 7th canto presents the firm hard rock on which all the frail barks of the patriarchalists split; and the matriarchal or Marumakalthayam theory rests its solid foundation upon. The passage is worth repetition, as it has to be scanned and scrutinised carefully in view of its great importance.

“அத்துவற்கு, ஒரு தத்தையின்றமகள்
பொறையன் பெருந்தேவி யின்றமகள்”

“To Anduvan, the daughter of his own father and wife to Porayan bore a son” (heir). From the context it is clear the mother of Kadungo—[the hero of this, the 7th canto] had the same father as Anduvan Cheral had. She must thus be Anduvan’s sister. She is also said to be the wife of Porayan. Anduvan cannot possibly have a son by his own sister, who is also another man’s wife. If Kadungo were taken as the son of Anduvan, then Anduvan’s relation with Kadungo’s mother would be

both incestuous and adulterous. No poet would eulogise incest or adultery, much less both the sins in prize-poems. There is no escape from these terrible results, if Kadungo were taken to be Anduvan's own son.

Again the sequence in the attributes to the hero's mother in these lines is unmistakably suggestive. She is first said to be Anduvan's father's daughter, and then again described as Porayan's wife. The poet refers here both to her father and to her husband in separate but appropriate phrases. Not to mistake the word mahal (மகன்) for a wife and to make sure it there means only a daughter, the poet takes care to add expressly the qualifying participle 'ஈன்ற' (begotten) before 'மகன்': and to avoid mistaking her son to be begotten on her by her brother Anduvan, the author again puts in the attributes "பொறையன் பெருந்தேவி" 'the great wife of Porayan' between ஈன்ற மகன் and ஈன்ற மகன் - in the last of these lines. The intention of the poet cannot be expressed more clearly or logically than by these lines. Kadungo's mother is expressly said to be Anduvan's sister and Porayan's wife. She could not therefore have borne her son to Anduvan, but might and would well have given her brother an heir. *It is thus clear that Kadungo was her husband Porayan's son by her, and her brother Anduvan's heir by her.* If this were not Marumakalthayam, I cannot see what else could be. Whatever interpretation we may put to the passages in the other Pathikams, it is not possible to mistake the meaning of the language of this 7th epilogue. It is as unmistakable as it is conclusive. It refuses to be squeezed or stretched to square with the patriarchal view. It stands out to

proclaim the Marumakkalthayam succession in the Chera-House. Every attempt to press these lines into service for the other view would be found unavailing. On the contrary the language of all the other Pathikams would appear to agree to conform to and confirm the matriarchal view inexorably entailed and eloquently enunciated by these lines in this epilogue. In such circumstances, we are left no option. We must fairly and honestly agree to accept the conclusion so conclusively and irresistably indicated to us by these passages in the Pathikams in Pathitrupathu.

5. The Epilogic of the 5th Canto Examined:

(a) The language of the 5th canto epilogue is obviously defective. It now reads “நெடுஞ்சேலாதற்கு, சோழன் மணக்கிள்ளி யின்றமகன். Hitherto scholars took this to mean that the hero Chenguttuvan herein referred to is the son borne by Chozhan Manakilli to Nedun Cheralathan: that is, Athan was the father and Chozhan Manakilli (whoever it were) was the mother of Chenguttuvan. The text if rightly understood will never for a moment admit of this interpretation. Chozhan Manakilli could not be the name of King Chenguttuvan's mother. Manakilli was assumed to be the proper name of the mother, and she was given assumed to be the daughter of a Chola king. Patriarchalists here thus press into service a double dose of presumption or presumption squared to support their pet postulate.

(b) In the first place there is nothing in the context to show how Manakilli (if this were a woman's name)

is at all related to the nameless Chozha king. Words like 'Devi' in cantos 4,5, 7 and 8 or 'Venmal' in cantos 2 & 9 are absent here: and there is no other substitute or equivalent standing in their place to correlate the woman and the man mentioned in the context.

(c) Secondly we have no warrant whatever to assume that the word Manakkili is the name of any woman at all. On the contrary 'Killi' is a well known surname of the Chola kings Venverkilli, Venkilli, Nēdumkilli, Nēdumudikilli, Kazharkilli, Ilankilli, Vadiverkilli, Mavankilli are all names only of Chola kings. Says Sendan in his Thivakaram (Lexicon) "கோச்சோழன் பெயர்—சென்னி, வளவன், கிள்ளி, செம்பியன்" "Chenni-Valavin-Killi-Chemblyan are all names of Chola Kings." Killi is thus one of the titles or surnames of the Chola kings. And it is never known to be used as a name of feminine gender in any known context anywhere by any classical poet. 'Manakilli' in the 5th epilogue must therefore be only the name of the great Chola king therein referred to, and cannot have any reference to any woman howsoever related to him.]

(d) And lastly, we must not fail to note that in the other Pathikams we find the heroes' fathers' names to be always expressly mentioned even where their mothers names are omitted. Reason and common sense alike require us to seek the same system adopted in this Pathikam of the 5th canto as well, as has been uniformly and studiously observed in all the rest in the same book. We see no reason why in this 5th Pathikam alone a deliberate departure should be presumed, and why the Chola king should be left unnamed, and why the woman's proper name alone should be mentioned contrary to the uni-

form vogue in all the postscripts to all the other cantos of this book. It stands eminently to reason therefore to take the word 'manakilli' in this context to be only the name of the Chola king mentioned in this epilogue. Chozhan and Manakilli here must go together and mean Manakilli-the Chola king, just as the words Vel-Avikoman in the cantos 4,6 & 8 go together meaning only Avithe Velir chief. They always stand together in all Pathikams as the names and the attributes in apposition to those names. Thus this part of the 3rd line in this 5th Pathikam only conforms to the corresponding contexts in the rest of the book. Only, as it stands, it also betrays a defect on its very face. Some connecting word as Devī or Venmal after Manakilli (மணக்கிள்ளி) and before 'eenramahan' (ஈன்றமகன்) is essential to complete the sense. Without some such conjunctive, the line as it stands is patently defective and leads to misunderstandings. The Chola king Manakilli could not mother the hero of the piece. And even if Manakilli were assumed to be a woman, still the line betrays its hiatus, and the lacuna requires to be filled up. For, Manakilli and Chozhan are placed in juxta position in the line without any word to correlate them. Either one is the noun in apposition to the other, or is quite an independent term in the context. In either view the line, as it is, is defective. A connecting word like Devī must come in somewhere, either before or after Manakilli to make sense out of the line. We have found Manakilli to be only the name of a Chola king. The sounder and the only sensible view therefore is that a word like Devī must succeed the word Manakilli, and then the line would be perfect and in harmony with the rest of the Pathikams in the book. The line would then read like this:- சோழன் மணக்கிள்ளி தேவி யீன்ற மகன்.

Thus this epilogue of the 5th canto also tells us the same story, viz, that the hero Chenguttuvan was the son begotten by a Chola king on his queen, but as the heir to the Chera crown of Nedum Cheral Athan.

6. Some Questiones Raised And Answered:

(a) Before leaving this part of the discussion, it is but fair that I should refer to a passage relied on by some scholars for giving to Chenguttuvan a Chera king for his father and a Chola princess for mother. They quote a passage from Adiarkunallar's commentary on the prologue to Chillappathikaram. It reads follows:—“சேரலாதற்கு... சோழன் தன் மகள் நற்சோனை யின்ற மக்கள் இருவருள் முன்-னோன்”. As this passage refers to Chenguttuvan, the scholars make it the basis of their version of Chenguttuvan's parentage. On this authority they declare that Chenguttuvan and his brother Ilango were begotten by Cheral Athan on his queen Narchonai, who was a daughter of the Chola king Manakilli. We are not referred to the source of Adiarkunallar's information for the particulars he gives in this passage. As it is, this passage is the sole authority cited by the advocates of the patriarchal pedigree or Makkalthayam for the Chera kings. But I can add for their benefit even a more authoritative text lending colour to their view. In the body of the epic itself, we find a passage of Ilango which appears to lend support to this opinion. For it reads:—“சேரலாதற்குத் திகழொளி ஞாயிற்றுச் சோழன் மகளின்ற மைந்தன்...செங்குட்டுவன்”*. Most probably Adiyarkku Nallar simply borrowed these expressions in his gloss on the prologue to Chilappathikaram from this text of the author in the epic poem. The commentator, who lived over ten centuries after the poet and in the Chilap. Canto 29.

Eastern Tamil country solely dominated by the patriarchal institutions and practices, might or might not have completely grasped and appreciated the full significance and true bearing of the poet's phraseology. whatever it be, to us now this text of Ilango alone is of supreme authority; and it well put out of court the matriarchal or marumakkalthayam theory unless it admits of an interpretation consistent with such a thesis. It is up to us therefore to thrash out these texts more thoroughly both intrinsically and in their relation to similar connected passages in the old classics. If the word 'மகள்' in both these quotations would only mean a daughter and no other, then these texts will be no mean authority for the patriarchalists. And so we have to look into its significance in these contexts a little more scrupulously, and with genuine loyalty to the spirit of historical criticism. We will have no scruple to take this word mahal (மகள்) in its ordinary meaning of a daughter, if other texts of unchallengeable authority would all square with the patriarchal view of the Chera pedigree. But the texts we discussed above almost exclude such a possibility. They unmistakably indicate the observance of the matriarchal or marumakkalthayam law in the royal Chera dynasties. The epilogue to the 7th canto in Pathitrupathu especially precludes the makkalthayam theory and would conclusively prove the contrary custom. Ilango's text and the Pathikams of Pathitrupathu cannot be at war, and should be reconciled if possible.

And in this difficult situation light seems to come to us from an equally great authority-Sathanar-a poet contemporary with Ilango. Manimekalai and Chiliappathi-

karam are both works of poets, who were not merely contemporaries but also confreres. They composed their respective epics with daily contact and in constant consultation. Any help therefore which Manimekalai can lend to interpret texts in Chillappathikaram would thus be appropriate and therefore should be all the more welcome. Let us now see what help Sathanar can render us to extricate ourselves from a dilemma, and to reconcile the seemingly conflicting texts in the classics like Chilappathiharam and Pathitrupathu. We read in the 21st Kathai in Manimekalai these lines.

“நினக்கவன் மகனாத் தோன்றியதூஉம்
மனிக்கினியாற்குநீ மகளாயதூஉம்
பண்டும்பண்டும் பலபிறப்புளவால்”

The Sangam bard Sathanar in these lines refer to a reading by a deity of the previous lives of Manimekalai and her lover, the Chola prince Uthayakumaran. The stone image, stirred by its resident divinity, reveals to the heroine of the epic the secrets of her past and future births, and in this connection tells her that she and her princely lover had been man and wife in many a previous birth. The words used here to denote their conjugal relationship are significant. She is said to be her husband's mahal (மகன்) just as he is described as her mahan (மகன்). The two words are used by the Sangam poet in his “great epic in the meaning of husband and wife, and not of son and daughter. This use may not be general, but it is obvious that it is not uncommon. The word மகன் here stands unmistakably to denote only a wife and not a daughter. Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit

Swaminatha Iyer takes this word in the same meaning in his gloss on these lines.

Thus we now find that மகன் may mean a wife in the Sangam works; and it need scare us no longer in its context in the passages cited above from Ilango and Adi-arkunallar. With the help and in the light of Sathanar's classic use of this word மகன், we can now easily overcome all the apparent difficulties presented by these passage under review to the pursuit of our investigation. "சேரலாதற்கு சோழன் மகளின்றமகன்"—interpreted in the light of Sathanar's lines mean only the son born to the Chola king and his queen (wife) as heir to the great Cheral Athan'. Thus we find these passages of Ilango and Adiarkunallar also to fall into line with the texts in the Pathikams of Pathitrupathu. This meaning is also in consonance with the canons of interpretation. Plain common sense also requires that we should give only such interpretation to seemingly conflicting texts as will reconcile them into harmony. These passages of Ilango and Adiarkunallar militate against the equally authoritative passages in the Pathikams of Pathitrupathu, if மகன் were taken to mean only a daughter; but they all accord in harmony with one another, if மகன் here were taken in the meaning given to that word by Sathanar in Manimekalai. We can no longer hesitate to choose between these alternatives. The result is that we find the apparent difficulty melts away, and that we only find even more support in these passages to the matriarchal view than was bargained for, and that scholars who relied on these texts as the sheet anchor for the opposite patriarchal theory will now find they reckoned without their host and were all

the time standing on quick sands that now only serve to swallow up their pet theory.

(b) Similarly the advocates of the patriarchal theory may seize hold of two other passages in Chilappathikaram, and press them into service in support of their views. In Varamtharu—Kathai there is a reference in the narration of the junior prince (Ilango) which reads as follows:—
 “துத்தை தாணிழலிருந்தோய், தின்னை.....” It means “Thou that sat sheltered under the footstool of thy ancestor”. Adiarkunallar in his commentary on the prologue or pathikam says as follows:—“நிமித்திகள்..... ‘சோதிதீ’ எனச் சேரலுற்தரைத்தவன் மைந்தரை நோக்கி, ‘நந்தாச் செங்கோல் அந்தமி லின்பத் தாஈளுரிமை இனையோற்குண்டு’ என.” In its English rendering it will read “The soothsayer, having said to the Chera King ‘you may go’, next turned to the youngsters there and prophesied as follows—‘the right to wield the eternal sceptre of endless happiness is reserved to the younger prince’”. “These two passages may also possibly be indented on by patriarchalists in favour of their theory.

The word Nundhai - (துத்தை) in the 1st passage is by them taken to mean a ‘father’, and the word myndhar- (மைந்தர்) in the second to mean sons. With this interpretation they may argue that these passages make out a relationship between Cheralathan and Chēnguttuvan as one of father and son. But the truth is that these words and their cognates-such as Endhai (எத்தை), Thandhai (தத்தை) etc.,- do not always stand for father and son in Tamil poems. On the other hand, in Tamil classics they are often used as terms only of respect and endearment,

as the nearest equivalents of the English words 'sire' and 'youth'. A poet addresses a chief of Venkadom as Endhai-(எந்தை) my sire (Vide) "எந்தைவாழி ஆதனுங்க". Again Chola kings are referred to as the sires or fathers to the chief Ahuthai [அஃதைதந்தை அண்ணல்யாண அடு-போர்ச்சோழர்]. In Thivakaram the word 'myndhar' is said to denote only human males. "மாந்தர் - மைந்தர் - மக்களாண்பொதுப்பெயர்". "The words mandhar and myndhar are names which apply in common to all male humanity." Without any breach of propriety therefore the princes here might well have been called 'myndhar', and the king referred to as 'your sire' [நுந்தை], even though the former were only nephews and no sons of the latter. Merely from these references it is impossible to deduce any positive paternal or patriarchal relationship between the Chera king and the princes here. There is nowhere in the whole wide range of early sangam classics any reference definitely to denote such a relationship among Chera kings. On the contrary we find only words like (மருகர்) marukar are used in almost all such contexts, which clearly indicate they are only nephews to their ancestors on the Chera throne.

Anyway these texts do not establish any patriarchal devolution or makalthayam in the Chera dynasties; but on the other hand they readily fall into line with the epilogues in the ten-tens, which bear eloquent testimony to the existence only of marumakalthayam in the royal Chera houses.



IV. OTHER POSITIVE PROOFS OF MARUMAKALTHAYAM

We have so far dwelt solely on the textual testimony available from these ten-ten idylls. We will now turn for a while to discuss and weigh some other general considerations that bear and tend to throw more light on this subject.

i. Absence of Reference to the names of Consorts of the Chera Kings :

(a) We are first faced with a significant feature common to the whole anthology of the ten-tens that strikingly

arrests our attention at the very outset. The bards frequently make express references to the wives of the individual Chera kings they lionise in their songs. Nevertheless they do not name or anywise refer to in the songs any one of the princely dames mentioned as the heroes' mothers in the epilogues. It is belived at present that the dames mentioned in the Pathikams are the wives of the respective Chera kings, with whose names all the Pathikams uniformly open their themes. If Nallini, Anduvanchellai, or Paduman Devi or Manakilli mentioned in the Pathikams were any of them a Queen of any of the Chera kings as has hitherto been presumed, nothing is more natural than that they should be so referred to in the verses in praise of their assumed husbands, especially in contexts at least where the poets expressly refer to their royal spouses in many of the main verses in those cantos. Nevertheless none of the princesses mentioned in the epilogues receive any notice at the hands of these eulogists in these contexts in their songs, although on more occasions than one do they speak of the consorts of the hero-kings there.

(b) The situation is very intriguingly interesting. Princesses, whom the epilogues speak of as the royal mothers of Chera heroes, are taken to be the consorts of the Chera kings also named therein. These kings are eulogised in the cantos. The poets frequently refer to the love and fidelity of the spouses of those kings in the canto-verses. Yet none of the Pathikam-queens are noticed anywhere in these cantos by any one of the panegyrists. These dames deserve and ought to demand especial attention of the poets if they were queens of the Chera kings.

For, they would be not only queens of kings as is now assumed, but are also the honourable mothers of the kings' hero-heirs honoured as such in the Pathikams. Why then are they studiedly slighted in the cantos, while they are specially honoured in the epilogues? The most natural and the only convincing explanation of this apparent absurdity is this. None of the princely dames mentioned in the Pathikams is a consort of any Chera king; whereas they are all of them queen-mothers of kings on the Chera throne. As mothers of kings they are honourably mentioned in the epilogues, which speak of their pedigree. Even their uncrowned princely consorts are also mentioned in these postscripts, as they deserve to be as the heroes' fathers. But as these dames are not wives, but only sisters or in loco sororis to Chera kings, they are rightly omitted in the canto-songs in all places where those kings' consorts alone-and not the mothers of the kings' heirs-are to be referred to.

(c) And again those consorts receive merely a passing reference but are not named in the cantos, while the heroes' mothers are fully described in the Pathikams. This fact also will square only with the matriarchal system in the Chera dynasties. For, in patriarchal families wives have recognised status and right, which cannot be ignored and which give them importance. In the matriarchal homes on the other hand, it is the mother and mother's daughters alone that count and must be reckoned with. Wives have no position to claim, nor rights to enforce in the family of their consorts. Their rightful place is only in their mother's homes, and their sons are heirs not to their husbands but only to their uncles and brothers. The only part they may play in their husbands'

homes is that of their companions and not of wives. They may be welcome guests, but are not members of the family of their husbands. They can never be mothers of the scions or heirs of the husbands' families. Their is purely a personal relation to their husbands. They have thus no real importance that counts in the husbands' families. The poets who sing of the Chere-heroes may merely make flattering references to the love or liaison of their patrons' mates to please them, but would leave it at that without taking any further notice or giving any fuller details of who is who in reference to any of these rightless consorts of kings. But when speaking of the kings' mothers in the epilogues, the poets would take care naturally to describe them more fully as befit their queenly or rather regal status as members of the royal house and mothers of kings. The epilogues do also always speak of these mother's princely consorts (who are not Chera kings) to make the pedigree of the hero-kings complete, and not to leave any doubt as to their two parents. Only the epilogues, which always make mention of the heroes as sons of the two named parents, also name the Chera kings to whom those hero-sons are heirs. The whole design and scheme of the Pathikams is thus clear and unmistakable. They mention both the parents of the heroes in clear and express and appropriate terms, and at the same time refer also to the Chera kings to whose crowns the heroes succeed. This is just what we should expect and require poets who sing of matriarchal kings to do, and just what would be unnecessary and irrelevant in cases of kings born in patriarchal families.

ii. Order of Succession of kings on the Chera throne:

The next and yet more cogently conclusive testimony

in proof of the marumakkalthayam in the Chera family is the known order of succession to the throne among the members of their royal house. Strict primogeniture in the senior male line is the general rule of succession that governs all the makkalthayam royalties in India. Precepts and practice alike confirm this rule. Sons of kings will therefore exclude the king's brothers. Yet the evidence of the Sangam Classics proves just the reverse order of succession to the Chera throne. Imayavaramban Neduncheral Athan reigns over the Chera country for 58 years; and he dies leaving at least 3 known heirs surviving him, who are all sons according to the scholars who stretch the epilogues to support their patriarchal view. These scholars maintain that Narmudicheral, Chenguttuvan and Adukotpattu Cheral Athan, heroes respectively of the 4th, 5th, and 6th Pathikams, are all sons of Imayavaramban, the hero of the 2nd canto. Yet these 3 sons are superseded on the throne by the king's younger brother, Palyanai Chelkezhut Kuttuvan, the hero of the 3rd ten in the Pathitirupathu. Why should it be so, or how can it be reconciled with the settled law and usage to the contrary? If the Chera were ruled by makkalthayam, then Imayavaramban's eldest son must wear the Chera crown on his father's death, and his uncle should only pay him homage as his first liege and loyal subject in his land. Yet the uncle is said to have held the sceptre for a full quarter century and to have kept the throne till he died.

Again, under the law of succession in makkalthayam families, the crown goes only to the nearest heir of the last reigning sovereign, and not to the heirs of any remote predecessors on the throne. Narmudicheral and Adukotpattu Cheral Athan are uterine brothers, being

both sons of one Vel Paduman's Devi. And Narmudi succeeds his uncle Chelkezhu Kuttuvan as perhaps the eldest of all the sons: and on his death, his son should ascend his throne. We are not told he had no son. But if he had none, then only his uterine brother, being nearest heir to him, must have preferential claim to his crown. He must supersede his step-brothers. Yet we learn from the ten-tens that only his step brother Chenguttuvan succeeds to the Chera crown after Narmudi and before Adukotpattu Cheral Athan. Yet again Chenguttuvan is expressly said by the author of the 5th epilogue to have had a son of his own. Yet this son does not succeed to his father, but only his step-uncle Adukotpattu Cheran does.

All these hard facts refuse to harmonise with the known rules and established usages of the makkalthayam succession. But all these inexplicable enigmas will readily resolve themselves in the light of the express narration of the Pathikams as regards the pedigree and succession of these Chera kings as members of the matriarchal family. Imayavaramban and Palyanai Chelkezhu Kuttuvan are admittedly brothers. And in the same way Narmudi Cheral, Chenguttuvan and Adukotpattu Cheral Athan are their 3 nephews, being sons of sisters or cousins. According to the Marumakalthayam law, the 2 uncles rightly take the crown successively in their order of age; and after both of them die, their surviving nephews succeed only according to their seniority by birth. Neither the fact of Chenguttuvan having a son, nor of his being only a step brother to Narmudi and Adukotpattu Cheral Athan will militate against these three brothers

successively ascending the Chera throne according to their respective seniority of birth in the royal House. In the kindred Irumparai branch of the Cheras also, we find only nephews successively succeeding to the masnad. Kings' sons have no jural relation to their father's family; and so they do not succeed to the Chera throne. This explains why not only Chenguttuvan's known son is rightly kept out of the crown, but also even if other Chera Kings had their own sons why none of them claimed their father's throne. For, as sons they will have no right thereto. It is only the nephews who succeed as the rightful heirs of their uncles to their throne; for, the very essence of the principle of Marumakkalthayam is that 'descent is always traced only through the female line'. 'The relation of husband and wife, or of father and child is not inherent in the conception of a marumakkalthayam family.' 'The person who occupies the position of a son to a king or karnavan following the marumakkalthayam law will not be his own son who is *de jure* stranger to his family, but only the son of his sister or sister's daughter.' The order of succession therefore mentioned in the ten-tens, which is so obviously obnoxious to the ordinary makkalthayam rules, just fits in with the letter and spirit of this marumakkalthayam law, and quite lucidly illustrates its principles. Thus these irrepressible facts of succession in the Chera families afford the conclusive confirmation of the operation of the marumakkalthayam with them, as opposed to the opposite system of law in vogue in the other contemporary royal dynasties of the Pandias and the Cholas in Tamilaham.

iii. The import and significance of the uniform use of the word *maruhan* in reference to the Chera kings in relation to their predecessors:

I may also refer to just one other fact equally suggestive in its significance in this connection, before I conclude this discussion of the evidence touching on this interesting question of importance to the history of Tamilaham. The advocates of a patriarchal pedigree to the Cheras of the Sangam eras speak of the heroes commemorated in the classics to be all agnates, most of the being related to one another as father and sons. Many poets have sung of most of these Chera heroes; and in many a poem they are praised as worthy scions of their worthy forbears. Yet on every occasion a Chera king is so correlated to any of his predecessors, he is always spoken of only as the heir or nephew, and not as the son or son's of his honoured forefather. The Tamil word uniformly used on all such occasions by all the poets in reference to Chera kings in relation to their predecessors on the throne is [மருகன்] *maruhan* or (மருமாள்) *maruman*. These words in Tamil mean primarily a sister's son or a son-in-law; and although they have also now acquired a secondary significance to denote an heir or a remote descendant, yet they are still inapplicable to any son or a son's son. First the fact stands out that none of the heroes of the 8 cantos in the ten-tens is ever addressed as the son of his great father, although we are asked to believe that 3 of them, the heroes of the 4th, 5th and 6th cantos, are the direct sons of Imayavaramban, and that the last four cheras mentioned in the 7th to 9th cantos are also Sapindas or agnates related to each other successively as father and son. Many of them were such great hero-

kings, and their achievements and triumphs were so numerous and so loudly belauded, that they are very often invoked by poets in many a song as the worthy ancestors of their patrons merely to do honour to the latter. If such heroes' own sons bore sway after them, and all those sons also received many commemorative poems in their honour from many a poet, is it not very strange that none of them should even once be remembered honourably as the son of his great father, while the latter's name is yet so lavishly and deliberately invoked to lend lustre to the poet's patron's escutcheon and to add honour to his pedigree by mentioning him merely as the previous hero's maruhan or nephew. There are references to the predecessors of some of these very Chera heroes of the cantos in the ten-tens. Yet they are only spoken of as maruhans or nephews, and not as sons of those illustrious ancestors named and lionised in the body of this very collection of the ten-tens. The inference is inexorably irresistible that none of these heroes is a son to another, but must only be a nephew or brother to his predecessor as is rightly referred to in this work as well as in the other anthologies of the Sangam classics. The absence of a single reference to any of the Chera kings as a son of his father, coupled with the frequent and uniform references to them as nephews of their worthy predecessors in old Tamil classics affords yet another proof of their being governed only by the marumakkalthayam law in their families.

IV. A suggestion as to how the word *maruhan* acquired its present meanings.

In this connection an idea suggests itself to me, which tends to reinforce the view just discussed. The

word maruhan [மருகன்] has now no doubt acquired a secondary meaning of an heir or successor, though not a son. Its primary meaning is only a nephew, *i.e.*, sister's son. The word in the ordinary patriarchal or makkalthayam society can never come to denote an heir. For, in such a society a nephew is not and cannot be a direct heir to his uncle. And if marumakkalthayam was never known to or practiced by any section of the Tamils in the Sangam-age, the name of a nephew can never acquire any meaning signifying an heir. If on the other hand marumakkalthayam was practised anywhere, then under the operation of that system it is only nephew that will ever be heirs; and the name of a nephew may in course of time readily and naturally lend itself to extended signification and to become an equivalent of heirs in general. The later common use of this word [மருகன்] maruhan by poets to denote all heirs or successors in law as such, as distinguished from sons in the direct male lineage, is proof positive of the existence of marumakkalthayam in the Tamilaham of the classic-age. And as we know of no known instance of its operation in any Tamil family east of the Ghats within memorable times, and as we have now several proofs of its existence in the Chera country, it is more safe to conclude that it is the long established immemorial Chera marumakkalthayam-system alone that helped to extend this word (மருகன்) maruhan in its significance and to give it an additional secondary meaning to denote an heir, rather than to infer that the Cheras followed only the makkalthayam law simply from their being called (மருகர்) maruhars (heirs) to their predecessors, a term which has since come to be applied also to some of the heirs of the kings in the other makalthayam royal-houses in Tamilaham.

V. Why the word *Mahan*, are not the word *Maruhan* is used in all the Pathikams:

I will now attempt the elucidation of the bearing and significance of the word 'mahan' (மகன்)-used in all the epilogues of the ten-tens, which I reserved at an earlier stage for a later discussion. In sharp contradistinction with the universal and uniform use of the word 'maruhan' in reference to the Chera-kings in all the Sangam-poems and even in those of the cantos in the ten-tens, we find in all its pathikams the equally invariable use only of the word 'mahan'. It seems quite an irony that this word mahan meaning a son should alone be uniformly applied to the Cheras in these very postscripts, which more than any other literature afford the most explicit and convincing proofs of their marumakkalthayam. On the surface it presents an apparent conundrum; but on closer scrutiny it loses all its puzzling contrariety. It is best for us now to know all the several meanings of this word 'mahan', before we clinch the discussion as to its apt and proper use in the epilogues. It has about four meanings:—1. a man. 2. a husband. 3. a son. 4. and an heir or mere successor as distinct from a son. Now in all the Pathikams, the word 'mahan' is preceded and qualified by the participle (சேன்ற) yeendra, which means begotten. This immediately preceding participle therefore eliminates the first two meanings, and naturally points to the third, viz, a son. The phrase in the Pathikams thus leaves no doubt as to the meaning of the word mahan in its context. It means only a son in all the pathikams. But the hero in every epilogue is only referred to as a son begotten by the particular parents expressly mentioned in each Pathikam. The hero's father

is always named, and mother is either named or described as that father's devi or wife. The hero-king is thus rightly said to be a son begotten and borne by parents so expressly and proximately mentioned therein. In relation to them the hero-king will, as he must, be only a son. But what about his relation to the Chera king remotely named at the beginning of every epilogue? They are not to be taken to stand as father and son to each other. On the contrary, the fact of the hero's mother and her husband being always named more proximately to this word mahan (son) in the epilogues makes it clear beyond doubt that the Chera king named remotely in the opening lines cannot also be this son's father. Yet there is no other word used by the poet in the context to bring out the exact relationship between these two Chera kings; the word 'mahan' stands alone to correlate the hero both to his proximately named parents and also to the Chera king remotely named at the outset. It is here the fourth meaning of the word 'mahan', viz., an heir, finds its use. The hero is rightly said to be a mahan (son) to the parents mentioned in every Pathikam, and is also not improperly called a mahan (heir) to the Chera king named in the opening lines of each of these Pathikams. Sonship by blood is indicated in one case by the qualifying participle begotten (பெற்ற) standing between the word mahan and the words denoting the hero's real parents; and mere heirship in contrast in the other case is suggested by the remote and bare mention of the predecessor's name without any word to hint at any more intimate kinship between that Chera king and the hero-mahan. By the rules of Tamil grammar, the fourth-case suffix Ku (கு) may can note both gift as well as connection. Here we

find that the names of the Chera king are ever in the 4th case; but the word for the hero's mother in every post-script is only in the 1st or subject-case, always accompanied by its predicate in the word begotten (யின்ற). The author thus has taken care to avoid all possible mistakes. And by the choice use of his language, he makes it pretty clear that the hero is mahan [son] borne by the mother mentioned proximately to him, and he is only mahan [heir] by her gift to the Chera king more remotely named at the outset in every Pathikam. The word 'maruhan' meaning an heir or nephew, if used here in the place of 'mahan', may apply express the relationship of the hero to the Chera king; but it will be quite inappropriate in correlating the hero with his parents. The word mahan alone suitably expresses both the relationships (*i. e.*) sonship to the parents and heriship to the kingly uncle. The poet engages himself in these epilogues to give us the full pedigree of his heroes. He is not writing a biography in prose to be at pains to describe the several relationships of the heroes in separate and more elaborate sentences. He is a poet in his element. He is graphically but poetically epitomising the details of the pedigree and heraldics of his heroes in the epilogues. He therefore naturally eschews the word 'maruhan' as unsuitable, and adopts the word 'mahan' as compendiously handy for his purpose in the context. And this purpose is this. To the parents named therein, the hero is only a son. And only a word signifying a son must be used to express their relationship. The word 'maruhan' will never signify a son as such; and so, it has to be eschewed. Whereas the word 'mahan' can alike apply to a son and to an heir who is not a son, the word 'maruhan' will only

mean an heir or nephew and never a son. The hero in each Pathikam is both a son to his named parents and an heir to the Chera king also named therein. His sonship to his parents as well as hreiship to the Chera king are both to be brought out; and the only word which can function to serve this double purpose is 'mahan', and not 'maruhan'. So the author of the epilogues preferably employs the word *mahan* in these difficult contexts to express this double relationship of the heroes. This use of the word *mahan* therefore in the epilogues of the ten-tens is appropriate and legitimate; and it cannot per-se land itself to any argument in support of *makkalthayam* for the Chera-heroes eulogised in these postscripts. This word here rightly fits in with their *marumakkalthayam*, which is also otherwise abundantly made out by the language and logic of these epilogues as discussed above.



V. CONCLUSION

The result of all these discussions thus leads us to the conclusion that marumakkalthayam or the matriarchal family system is not a recent or modern or even a post-Sangam importation into the land of the Cheras, but is one which has been in vogue there without a break now for over 2000 years and more, from prior to and during the Sangam eras, recognised and referred to as such even in the Sangam literature. Of course other questions still arise:— Whether this is an indigenous Tamilian institution born and bred in the prehistoric Tamilaham, or an imported custom borrowed, baptised and blessed by the Cheras in the West Coast? And again why, if it were indigenous, all the Tamils east of the Ghats should have had no trace of it within man's memory

and should from time immemorial be of purely patriarchal clans and tribes, while those in the West Coast alone retain and adhere to it all these long ages? And if it were an exotic foreign import in the Kerala country, whence, how and when came it, and why and how it found favour only there? These and similar questions are of absorbing interest to the students of Tamil history. They still remain unsolved and call for further research. Yet they are not essential or even relevant to the limited inquiry we here embarked upon. The aim of the present inquiry is humble and its scope is therefore limited. We set out only to enquire if the Kerala family system is a post-Sangam institution, voluntarily borrowed by or forcibly inflicted on a section of erstwhile patriarchal Tamil-people, or if it is old enough in the land of the Cheras to be known to and even practised at the age of the Sangam Classics. I must be content therefore to stop with suggesting the answer to this only question here in the light of the Sangam-Classics, and to take leave to broach the other interesting questions later on if and when leisure and opportunity afford me occasion therefor.



Some Studies about the
CHERAS OF YORE

PART I
THE ANTIQUITY OF THE CHERAS

1

GENERAL INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The ruling Chera dynasty appears to be as old as the Tamil civilization, which must date back to at least two or three millenniums before the Christian era. Many Greek and Latin writers from the 4th century B. C. refer to the Cheras as the kings of the west coast of the Tamil country. Both Ptolemy and Strabo, Pliny and the authors of the *Periplus*, all speak of Musiri as the great west coast port and emporium of the ancient Chera kingdom, and of its brisk seaborne trade with Egypt and the an-

cient empires in Europe. (The teak found in the ruins of Mughier, which only existed not later than 3,000 years B. C. was identified to be of the Chera hills of the west coast (*Vide, Ragozin's India*).) Very probably the peacock, the ivory and other articles of merchandise which according to the Hebrew books of kings and chronicles were imported in Solomon's ships came from the Chera coastlands. There are abundant references in the Tamil classics now over 2,000 years old bearing testimony to this time old maritime trade which the Chera ports carried on with the Yavanas of the distant west.

“.....சேரலர்

சுன்னியம் பேரியாற்று வெண்ணுரை கலங்க

யவனர் தந்த வினைமா னன்கலம்

பொன்னெடு வந்து கறியொடு பெயரும்

வளங்கெழு முசிரி”

(*Vide Aham Stz. 149*)

And we know that Ahananuru is one of the oldest classics in the Tamil Literature. Megasthenes mentions the three great ruling houses of the Ancient Tamilaham of which the Chera dynasty was one. Asokan edicts corroborate this statement of the Yavana (Greek) ambassador in the court of Chandragupta in the 4th century B. C. Almost all the old Tamil poems of the classic age, the last of which is not later than about the first or second century A. D., speak of the Cheras as the crowned monarchs of one of the three oldest Royal Houses that ruled over the whole Tamil-land from time immemorial.

There are some 3,000 poems by about 500 authors besides some classic grammars of times of yore, all col-

lected in over thirty volumes, which are now extant. Ahananuru or Aham 400 and Purananuru or Puram 400 are among the oldest of all these classic poems of prehistoric Sangam age. And in both these very ancient books there are references to these Chera kings of yore. *Vide:—*

(1) “கடந்தடு தானைச் சேர லாதனை
யாங்ஙன மொத்தியோ வீங்குசெலன் மண்டிலம்”
(Puram 8. Kapilar)

(2) “மாந்தரஞ் சேரலீரும்பொறை யோம்பிய நாடே
புத்தே னுலகத் தற்று”
(Puram 22. Kurunkoliyur Kilar)

(3) “சேரன் செம்பியன் சினங்கெழு திதியன்”
(Ahm 36. Madurai Nakkirar)

(4) “சேரலர்
கள்ளியம் பேரியாற்று”
(Ahm 149. Erukkattur Thayankannanar)

One of these thirty volumes, Pathirruppattu or Ten-Tens, exclusively eulogises ten Chera kings in its ten cantos.

The two oldest epics Silappadikaram and Manimekalai also make numerous and copious allusions to the greatness of the Chera monarches and their kingdom.

The age of these classics known as the Sangam Poems is now well-settled beyond dispute by the works of veteran research-scholars like late Mr. Kanakasabai Pillai and University Research Professors like Dr. S. K. Ayyangar, P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar and Prof.

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri to be somewhere between the fifth century B. C. and the 1st or 2nd century A. D. These poems as well as the Grammar 'Tholkappiyam', which is the oldest book in the Tamil Literature of the pre-christian era, all prove that the Cheras like the Pandyas and the Cholas, were potentates of powerful states, already of such an advanced civilization as to possess and reckon among their regalia all those modern symbols of kingship such as Royal crowns, Imperial flags, and dyanastic garlands and signets etc. etc.

- (1) "மும்மலையும் முத்தாடும் முத்ததியும் முப்பதியும்
மும்முரசும் முத்தமிழும் முக்கொடியும்—மும்மாவும்
தாமுடைய மன்னர் தடமுடிமேற்ற ரன்றோ
பாமுறைதேர் வள்ளுவர்முப் பால்"

(Thiruvalluvamalai-10)

- (2) "புலியொடு வின்னீக்கிப் புகழ்பொறித்த
கிளர்கெண்டை வலியினுள் வணக்கிய"

(Mullaikkali Stz. 104)

- (3) "வடதிசை மருங்கின் மன்னர்க் கெல்லாம்
தென்தமிழ் நன்னாட்டுச் செழுவில் கயல்புலி
மண்டலை யேற்ற வரைக ஈங்கென"

(Silappadikaram, Katchikkadai II 170-172)

- (4) "போந்தை வேம்பே ஆரென வருடம்
மாவெருந் தானையர் மலைத்த பூவும்"

(Tholkappiyam, Puratthinai—Sutram 5)

That the whole prehistoric Tamilaham was ruled over only by or was subject to the suzerainty of these three

kings is testified to by poems and sutrams in Purananuru and Tholkappiyam.

- (1) “மண்டினி கிடக்கைத் தண்டமிழ்க் கிழவர்
முரசு முழங்குதனை மூவ ருள்ளும்
அரசெனப் படுவது நினதே பெரும”

(Puram 35. Vellaikkudinaganar)

- (2) “வன்புகழ் மூவர் தண்பொழில் வரைப்பீன்
நாற்பெய ரெல்லை அகத்தவர் வழங்கும்”

(Thol. Seyyul Iyul—Sutram 391)

AGE OF THE CLASSIC POEMS

The age of these ancient poems like Purananuru, Ahananuru and Pathirruppattu and of the great grammar Tholkappiyam would thus afford us an idea of the antiquity of the Cheras. It behoves us here therefore to digress a little and investigate the facts which bear upon and which might help us to fix even approximately the great antiquity of these works in the Tamil Literature. Asoka's inscriptions and records of the Yavana [Greek] writers like Megasthenes square with

the Tamil traditions about the pre-deluge Tamilian culture and civilization.

The Ceylon histories like Mahawanso and Dipawanso also tell us that the Magatha Aeneas who led the first Aryan colony into Ceylon and founded the Lanka dynasty sought the hand of a Pandya-princess in the 6th century B. C., as worthy to be his 'Dido', Tholkappiyam and some at least of the poems of Purananuru are undoubtedly older than all the other works. It is a matter of common knowledge that the second stanza of the latter runs as follows:—

“அவங்குளைப் புரவி ஐவரொடு சினேஇ
நிலந்தலைக் கொண்ட பொலம்பூந் தும்பை
சுராம் பதின்மரும் பொருதுகளத் தொழியப்
பெருஞ்சோற்று மிகுபதம் வரையாது கொடுத்தோய்”

This professes to have been addressed by the poet Mudinagaroyar, a member of the first Tamil Academy in praise of his friend and patron Cheraman Perunchorru Uthiyan Cheralathan who lived at the time of the great Kuru-Pandava or Mahabharata war, which, if true, should go as far back as 1,000, B. C. if not even farther. That this tradition about the Chera king feeding the Kaurava armies in the great epic war is no new invention, but was in vogue and believed in even about the early Christian era is apparent from the following lines of Silappadikaram, which was composed not later than the 2nd century, A. D.

“ஓரைவ ரீராம் பதின்மர் உடன்றெழுந்த
போரிற் பெருஞ்சோறு போற்றுது தானளித்த

சேரர் பொறையன் மலையன்''

(Kathai 29, p. 289)

However this may be, there is more cogent reason to presume an age for some at least of the lyrics of Purananuru far earlier than that of all the last Sangam-works now extant.

Let us therefore now briefly review the most salient facts about the age of such of the classic poems as have special or particular references to the Cheras. Of the thirty volumes of these old classics, all research scholars are agreed as to the order of priority to be assigned to them. Puram and Aham 400 are reckoned to be the oldest. Next in point of time are poems like Pathiruppattu and Narrinai. The latest of the classics that relate to the Chera History are Silappadikaram and Manimekalai. The last two are epics, of which Silappadikaram might perhaps have been composed somewhat earlier than Manimekalai. For, while the latter distinctly refers to the destruction of the Chola's maritime metropolis—Kavirippumpattinam—by the sea, the former praises her beauties and wealth and blesses the capital as a still living city. Manimekalai may be of the second century A. D. But Silappadikaram should have been composed about the end of the first or early in the second century A. D. For, its author is no other than the ascetic brother of the great Chera warrior king Chenguttuvan, who ruled and warred all over India in that age. All available evidences, both in Tamil Literature and Ceylon records, in Sanskrit lore and in the field of archaeology have been reviewed and discussed threadbare; and the unanimous opinion of all unbiassed scholars tend to

assign Chenguttuvan's regime to about the first century A.D. Silappadikaram relates many of the important episodes in Chenguttuvan's life and reign in such an intimate manner as to suggest contemporaneity of the author to the royal hero of this superb epic. Therefore this epic must be of the first or early second century A. D.

We know that Chenguttuvan was the hero of the fifth ten of the Ten-Tens or Pathirruppattu, composed by Paranaar. That Paranaar was a contemporary of Chenguttuvan is proved not only by the epilogue of this fifth canto that definitely mentions that this poet received his rich reward for his eulogiums directly from the king Chenguttuvan, but also by the poems themselves which confirm this truth by the many direct addresses they contain. *Vide:—*

(1) “வசையில் நெடுந்தகை! காண்குவந் திசினே”

[Pattirruppattu. Stz. 41]

“O Great king of immaculate fame! I have come to meet you”

(2) “தொலையாக் கற்ப! நின்னிலை கண்டுகுமே”

(Ibid Stz. 43)

“O King of uninterrupted learning! We saw now your peerless position and pomp”

(3) “யாமும் சேறுகம், நீயிரும் வம்மின்

பெருஞ்சினக் குட்டுவந் கண்டனம் வரற்கே”

(Ibid, Stz. 49)

“We’ll go ourselves, you had better come also to greet the King ‘Kuttuvan’ of irresistible ire. (against foes).

This King Chenguttuvan succeeded to the royal Chera throne only after the four monarchs respectively eulogised in the first four Tens of this anthology—Pathiruppattu—successively reigned and ruled over the Chera kingdom. As the first ten poems are irretrievably lost, we do not know much of the King Cheral - Athan—the hero of the first of this series of ten cantos known as Ten-Tens. His successor Imayavaramban Nedum-Cheral-Athan sat on the Vanchi throne for fifty-eight years as is expressly mentioned in the epilogue of the second canto which eulogises this monarch. Imayavaramban’s junior brother Palyanai-Chelkezhut Kuttuvan wore the Chera crown for twenty-five years as per epilogue of the third canto. And Kalangai Kanni Nar Mudi Cheral, who succeeded these two brothers wielded the Chera sceptre for a quarter of a century—according to the epilogue of the fourth canto of Ten - Tens. And Cheran Chenguttuvan ascended the Vanchi throne only after these four monarchs; and he ruled for over half a century; for, the epilogue to the fifth canto says his reign in Vanchi lasted full fifty-five years. Thus, Imayavaramban’s reign over Vanchi must have started full one hundred years before Chenguttuvan ascended the Vanchi throne; and Imayavaramban is only the hero of the second canto. His predecessor Uthiyar Cheral Athan, the hero of the first canto therefore was on the Chera throne hundred and odd years before Chenguttuvan. This will take the second canto of the Ten - Tens obviously to the first century B. C. The author Kumattur Kannanar

[குமட்டுர்க் கண்ணனார்] was the poet-contemporary of the King Cheralathan [சேரலாதன்] he eulogises in canto two. That for these ten poems of canto second of Pathiruppattu (பதிற்றுப்பத்து) the poet was rewarded by the King Cheralathan with the gift of five hundred hamlets is expressly mentioned in the epilogue to the second canto. The direct appeals and apostrophes addressed in these ten verses unmistakably prove the contemporaneity of the poet with the Hero-King. *Vide:—*

(1) “போரடு தாலைச் சேர லாத!

.....

பலர்புகழ் செலவ மினிதுகண் டிகுமே”

(Pathiruppattu, Stz. 11).

“O King Cheral Athal, the head of an army that wins all wars, we have seen your great wealth which is praised by all”

(2) “.....எதிர்ந்த நின்

பகைவர் நாரும் கண்டுவந் திசினே

.....

.....சேர லாத!

நீவாழியரிவ் வுலகத் தோர்க்கென

.....

நீபுறந் தருதலின் நோய்தந் தொரீஇய

யாணர்நன் னாகும் கண்டுமதி மருண்டனென்”.

(Ibid, Stz. 15).

“I have just traversed the territory of your vanquished foes that dared to resist you; King Cheral Athal! May you live long for the benefit of the world

I am also agreeably surprised at the sight of your fertile and prosperous country immune from ills of every kind under the protecting aegis of your sceptre, in glowing contrast with that of your enemies now in ruins”

(3) அமர்கடந்து மலைந்த தும்பைப் பகைவர்
போர்வீ டழித்த செருப்புகல் முன்ப!
கூற்று வெகுண்டு வரினும் ஆற்றும் ஆற்றலையே!

.....

.....

இலங்குமணி மிடைந்த பொலன்கொள் திகிரிக்
கடலக வரைப்பினிற் பொழில்முழு தாண்டதின்
முன்றினை முதல்வர் போல நின்றுநீ
கெடா நல்லிசை நிலைஇத்
தவா வியரோ இவ்வுலகமோ நடனே”.

(Ibid, Stz. 14).

“O Chivalrous Warrior! that annihilates all hostile armies; O Strong man of prowess that defies even the death dealing deity. May you live long, and firmly establish your great fame and name far and wide over the whole land up to its sea-bound limits under your bejewelled golden sceptre just as the many hero forbears of your royal house have done before you; and may no evil ever touch you or your territory”

These last few lines just quoted add considerably to the antiquity of the Chera dynasty, for the poets' reference to King Imayavaramban the hero of canto two in this stanza is illuminating in that he is glorified here not as the first empire builder, but only

as the scion of a long line of hero-kings who were all rulers of empires. The age of the Ten-Tens may thus range from early in the first century B. C. to about the end of the second century A. D. And as already stated above, Puram and Aham are by far the oldest of all classical poems; and they are therefore of even a greater antiquity than the two epics and the poem—Pathiruppattu. We shall here investigate one or two facts that will prove this truth.

It is a well established custom with the early Tamil poets to wish their Kings in their songs more days of health and happiness than the sands in the beds of the chief rivers that glide by their capital towns.

For example we have

(1) For Chola

“சிறக்கநின் ஆயுள்
மிக்குவரு மின்னீர்க் காவிரி
எக்க ரிட்ட மணலினும் பலவே”

(Puram, Stz. 43)

(2) For Chera

“மண்ணுள் வேந்தே
நின்வாழ் நாட்கள்
தண்ணுன் பொருதை மணலினும் சிறக்க”

(Silappathikaram 28. L. 126—128)

(3) And when we come to the Pandiya King we find his name coupled with that of the river Pahruli in a similar manner:

“எங்கோ வாழிய குடுமி தங்கோச்
 செந்நீர்ப் பசும்பொன் வயிரியர்க் கீத்த
 முந்நீர் விழவி நெடியோன்
 நன்னீர்ப் பஹுனி மணவினும் பலவே”

(Puram 9.)

When we see these line stand addressed to a King by a contemporary poet it will be far too gratuitous to presume that he should have requisitioned the name of an imaginary or non-existing river in the case of this Pandiyan King alone, while in respect of the other two Tamil monarchs poets have had recourse only to their respective living streams. It would be strange to expect this poet to refer to the sands of a lost river rather than to those of the living Vaigai which has been associated by the later classical poets with the names of the Pandiyan monarchs, while his tuneful brethren attached to the other two Tamil Kings made use of the Kaviri and the Porunai for a like purpose. And the irresistible inference is that the stanza from Purananuru was composed by a poet who lived prior to the classic subsidence of the southern Tamil continent, that is to say, while the river Pahruli was still watering the southern Pandiyan provinces since submerged.

That Pahruli, the chief Pandiyan river, was wiped off the Indian map with a vast extent of Tamil territory—is borne testimony to not only by the great commentators but also by the old poets of the Sangam era. We learn from Adiyarkku Nallar who assures us that “கடல் பொருது பின்னொரு காலத்து அவனது (பாண்டியனது) தென்-திசைக் கண்ணதாபிய பஹுனியாற்றுடனே பலவாகிய பக்க

மலைகளையுடைய குமரிக் கோட்டையும் கொண்டதனால்” (Silap. P. 265) and again “அவருள் கனியாங்கேறினர் எழுவர் பாண்டியருள் ஒருவன் சயமாகீர்த்தியனாகிய நிலந்தருதிருவிற் பாண்டியன் தொல்காப்பியம் புலப்படுத்து இரீஇயினான். அக்காலத்து அவர் நாட்டுத் தென்பாவி முகத்திற்கு வடவெல்லையாகிய பஃறுளி யென்னும் ஆற்றிற்கும் குமரியென்னும் ஆற்றிற்கும் இடையே எழுநூற்றுக்காவத வாறும்..... .. இந்த நாற்பத்தொன்பது நாடும் குமரி கொல்லம் முதலிய பன்மலை நாடும் காடும் ததியும் பதியும் தடநீர்க்குமரி வடபெருங் கோட்டின் காறும் கடல் கொண்டொழிதலால்” etc.

(Silap. P. 197—198)

Nacchinarkiniar also tells us “கடலகத்துப்பட்டுக் குமரியாறு பனைநாட்டோடு கெடுவதற்குமுன்”¹ which receives corroboration from Ilampuranar who urges “கடல் கொள்வதன் முன்பு பிறநாடும் உண்மையின் தெற்கும் எல்லை கூறப்பட்டது”² and from the lines of Nila Kandanar who simply revises and edits Nakirar’s gloss upon the Ahap-porul that “அக்காலத்துப்போலும் பாண்டியனுட்டைக் கடல் கொண்டது”.³ We have it also in the Kalithokai:—

“மலிதிரை யூர்ந்துதன் மண்கடல் வெளவலின்
மெலிவின்றி மேற்சென்று மேவார்நா டிடம்படப்
புலியொடு வின்னீக்கிப் புகழ் பொறித்த கிளர்கெண்டை
வலியினான் வணக்கிய வாடாச்சீர்த் தென்னவன்

¹. Thol. Porul Athikaram, P. 809.

². Thol. Ilampuranar’s Eluthathikaram, P. 4.

³. Irayanar Agapporul, P. 5.

ஞெல்லிசை நட்ட குடியொடு தோன்றிய
நல்லினத் தாயர்”*

To go back to our subject. The author of Silappathi-karam also refers to this Tamil tradition of the subsidence of land in the south along with the river Pahruli and says that the submerged land was a Tamil country.

“நெடியோன் குன்றமும் தொடியோன் பௌவமுந்
தமிழ்வரம் பறுத்த தண்புன னூட்டு”

(Kathai VIII. lines 1—2. P. 194.)

And again,

“வடிவே லெறிந்த வார்பகை பொருது
பஃறுளி யாற்றுடன் பன்மலை யடுக்கத்துக்
குமரிக் கோடுங் கொடுங்கடல் கொள்ள
தென்றிசை யாண்ட தென்னவன் வாழி”.

(Kathai XI, lines 18 to 22. P. 257.)

* Mullai Kali Stan, 104, P. 327 (Mr. Kanakasabai Pillai has taken only the portion..

[“தென்னவன் ஞெல்லிசை நட்டகுடியொடு தோன்றிய நல்லினத்தாயர்,” and tries to fit it in with his Tibetan hypothesis of the Tamil origin. He argues from this that the Ayar race should have come with the Pandiyans from the North and attempts to draw a connection for these Ayars of the South and the wild Ahirs of the Northern India. He has quietly slurred over the inconvenient lines that open this stanza; and the reason is not far to seek. They militate against his fond Mongolian theory; for they directly support the Tamil tradition of the subsidence of the land and the advent of these Ayars with their King Pandiya from this submerged Southern land].

The gloss of Adiyarkunallar on these lines makes the matter still more clear. He says “அங்ஙனமாகிய நிலக் குறைக்குச் சோழநாட்டெல்லையிலே முத்தூர்க்குற்றமும், சேரநாட்டுக் குண்டுர்க்குற்றமும், என்னுமிவற்றை இழந்த நாட்டிற்காக ஆண்ட தென்னவன்” (Silap, P. 265 —266). This shows that the tradition embalmed in the Kali Stanza quoted about the Pandiyan encroachment on the Chera and Chola territories after the loss of his southern provinces, was known to and believed in by all Tamil writers since the third Sangam or the Augustan age of Tamil literature. Thus it will be clear that some at least of the lyrics of Purananuru, (like the one quoted, with a direct reference to Pahruli as a living river) should have been composed some time prior to the subsidence of the southern continent, and that some centuries should have again intervened between this subsidence and the 3rd Sangam age for this story of the deluge to have crystallised itself into a tradition in their poems. If the first century of the Christian Era be taken as the latest date of this third Tamil academy at Madura, it will not be far wrong if the earlier songs in Purananuru are assigned to at least the fifth or sixth century B. C.

AGE OF THOLKAPPIAM

We have also grounds to believe that Tholkappiam should be equally old, if not even older. Every Tamil student is aware of the unbroken tradition that Tholkappiam is of the first Sangam age, and was one of the standard authorities on grammar for the second and third Tamil Boards. If the tradition were worth anything, his orthodox Tamil grammar should have been in existence long prior to the deluvial catastrophe that swallowed up Kapadapuram, the seat of the second academy.

But as regards Tholkappiam even some Tamil scholars appear of late to be disposed to question the hoary age which unbroken tradition ascribe to it. Recently in a Madras University publication known as the "The Chronology of the early Tamils" a definite stand is taken by its writer, and the Pro-modernist view is advocated in a highly provocative challenging manner. It is time, in my opinion, that the whole question is reviewed in a dispassionate scientific spirit in the interest of truth: and I propose to prepare the ground for such a final decisive verdict in the world of Letters by an attempted approach to the truth in a twofold manner. Let me first try to test the worth and value of and valid warrant for the modernist arguments advanced in the chronology; and thereafter I shall marshal out and summarise the salient historic and literary evidences which would affirmatively indicate the real truth about this matter. As many problems relating to the history of the Tamil literature depend on the place and position of Tholkappiam in that literature, and are sure to be coloured by one's outlook on this question of the Age of Tholkappiam, its importance warrants an earnest inquiry into its truth. And I shall presently deal with the first part of this inquiry, viz., an assessment of the value and validity of the specific data given in the Chronology to refute Tholkappiam's claims for antiquity.

Dewan Bahadur S. E. Runganadan drew my attention to a review of the Chronology of the Early Tamils in the "Hindu". The reviewer's remarks interested me deeply; particularly the hearty approval he accorded to the conclusions of the learned author of the Chronology regarding the Age of Tholkappiam aroused my curiosity,

Directly I secured a copy of the Chronology and read it through with all the attention and care which such an University publication as the Chronology and the startling new theories expounded therein would demand. It struck me that the general remark of the Professor in his review that the book reveals some settled bias is really more warranted than the approval of the reviewer regarding the Age of Tholkappiam. It is obvious that both the author and the reviewer of the Chronology have some instinctive bias against the great antiquity which traditions and Tamil scholarship agree in according to the classical Tamil Vyakarnam. It is my purpose here briefly to canvass the reasons given in Appendix XV of the Chronology to prove that Tholkappiam should be assigned rather to 600 A. D. or a later time than to 600 B. C. or an earlier age. Five particular points are emphasised by the learned author of the Chronology in the Appendix in support of his conclusions. Let me deal with them seriatim.

1. As the "Venkatam" hills are mentioned in the preface or "payiram" to Tholkappiam as the northern limit of Tamilakam, and as the name 'Venkatam' itself is not mentioned in any Tamil literary works earlier than that of 'Kalladanar' of the 7th generation of the Chronology, the author of the Chronology argues Tholkappiam should be of a later age. For the first time, according to this author, Karikalan II extended the Tamil rule as far as the 'Venkatam' hills. If the author's premise is an established fact, there may be some force in his argument. But the very basis for this argument is an unproved and unwarranted assumption, and will be found to be founded on an error in fact. In the

first place Tholkappiam makes no reference to "Venkatam" at all; and the "Payiram" which mentions Venkatam is not the work of the author of Tholkappiam. Again it is a cardinal canon for all research workers that no valid argument can be based on mere absence of reference in any books to the points at issue in a discussion. No Sangam poet set himself to write any geographical treatises as such. He need not have mentioned anything on earth unless it had some necessary bearing on or relation to the subjects he was poetising upon. There are innumerable rivers, hills, valleys and villages in the Tamil Nad, that no poet ever referred to; and no one will seriously argue against their existence from the absence of any reference to any of them in the works of the literary writers. Thus the first point for the argument against the antiquity of Tholkappiam is found to be a bubble that stands no pricking.

But this is not all. The very hypothesis for this whole argument is untenable. That the "Venkatam" is not mentioned in any early Sangam work and cannot receive any such mention, because till Karikalan II extended his kingdom in the 6th century for the first time, the "Venkatam" hills lay far far north of the limits of Tamilakam, are statements which are as incorrect as they are unwarranted. The author of the Chronolgy has yet to establish this opinion he hazards about Karikalan II being the first warrior that extended his conquests to the foot of the "Venkatam" hills. He only throws out these suggestions, as arising out of his surmises from the absence of any earlier references to the Chola conquest of Aruvanadu before Karikalan II. But he knows as well as any Tamil scholar that Aruvanadu

was always part and parcel of the Tamil Nad; and as a matter of fact from the early times the Vadugas called the Tamils and their language by the name of this northernmost Tamil province, which bordered the Andhradesa. "Aravars" and "Aravam" are the Vadugu appellations for the Tamils and their language, famously familiarised by the author of "Parani" by his felicitous reference to the cries of the fleeing Vaduga warriors when Vanquished by the great Chola general Karunakara Thondaiman in his conquest of "Kalinga."

“ஒருவ ரொருவரி னோட முந்தினர்.
உடலி னிழிவினை யோட அஞ்சினர்
அபய மபயம் ஏனா நடுங்கினர்
அருவர் அருவரென இறைஞ்சினர்”

(Parani, Verse. 49)

The author of the Chronology admits in his book after an elaborate discussion that Purananuru, Agananuru, Narrinai and Kuruntokai (should) form the main basis and supply us with the primary evidence for the early history of the "Tamils", and that "Pathirrupattu and Pattuppattu are by their style and subject matter not far removed from them." Almost all these old classics refer to the "Venkatam" hills, and reinforce the tradition that not only these hills formed the northern bourn of the old Tamilakam, but that they were part of Tamilakam being ruled over by Tamil chieftains under the suzerainty of the Cholas. Verses 381, 385, 389 and 391 of Purananuru will make this fact abundantly clear. "ஒலிவெள்ளருவி வேங்கடநாடன்" (381) "கல்லிழி யருவி வேங்கடங் கிழ-வோன்" [389]. Nothing can give more definite evidence

than these references to the Tamilian 'proprietorship' and sovereignty of the Venkatam hills. And "Purananuru" is the oldest extant Tamil classic and Agananuru comes next to that according to the author of the Chronology. Let us therefore see if any and what evidence we may find in the Agananuru collection as regards this unchanging hill boundary of the old Tamilakam. Again verses numbers, 61, 211, 27, 213, 85 and some others as well speak of the "Venkatam" as being in the territory of the Tamil chieftains. "மழபுலம் வணக்கிய மாவண்புல்லி விழவுடை விழுச்சீர் வேங்கடம் பெறினும்" (61). Stanza 14 of "Narrinai" says the same story. In the face of this overwhelming evidence in all the oldest Tamil classics for treating the 'Venkatam' hills as in and of the old Tamil Nad, it is difficult to appreciate the argument of the author of the Chronology against the antiquity of Tholkappiam on the score that the preface or 'Payiram of Panamparanar' affixed to Tholkappiam refers to the "Venkatam" as the northern boundary of Tamilakam.

2. The second point of attack against the antiquity of Tholkappiam is founded on a presumption that the rulers in the Tamil country of the Sangam Age were all petty tribal chiefs, and none of them was a crowned king. Because Tholkappiam refers to the three crowned kings in the Tamilakam, therefore it should be of a very late period when some chieftains had established kingdoms and came to wear crowns also. It may well be that in the pre-historic remotest past, some warrior chiefs may have founded the thrones that acquired renown as the three great kingdoms in the Tamilakam. But what is the warrant for this author's dictum that in the Age of the

now extant Sangam poetry, there was not and could not be any crowned monarch in the whole Tamil Nad. He hazards an opinion that the founder and the first ruler of the Chola dynasty was Veliyan Thithan and he was only a Venman or crownless petty chieftain of Veerai, a coastal town in the estuary of the Kaveri river, or that he and his son ruled their people in the Chola territory without wearing a crown. That Thithan conquered and planted himself in Uranthai has yet to be proved by positive evidence. But even were it true, this would not conclude that there were no crowned kings in Uranthai. On the other hand Thithan himself may have usurped the crown with the throne of Uranthai kingdom. A chieftain may well conquer and establish his dynasty over a kingdom. Far from confirming the suggestion in the Chronicle, the very poets he quotes in this connection lend support to the fact, that Uranthai was not a mere manorial or baronial town, but was the famous capital of the Chola line of kings even at the time of Thithan.

“வென்றி முரசின் விறற்போர்ச் சோழன்
இன்கடுங் கள்ளின் உறந்தை யாங்கண்”

[Agam. 137.]

“வெல்போர்ச் சோழர் அழிசியம் பெருங்காட்டு”

[Narrinai. 87.]

“மறங்கெழு சோழ ருறந்தை யவையத்
தறநின்று நிலையிற்றுதலின்”

[Puram. 39.]

There is no specific proof that Venman Veliyan was the lineal ancestor or the prepositus of the Chola house

of Karikalan; or even that the Veerai chieftain permanently established his dynasty over the Uranthai throne. The very rule laid down by the author in his Chronology appears to rule out this surmise of his. He says "Three generations is the utmost limit to which a person could be assigned, and that too in very exceptional circumstances only. But beyond it, neither facts of history nor demands of logic would permit us to go." In his chronological tables [1] Veliyan Thithan, the Veerai chieftain, is shown as the prepositus of the Chola dynasty. [2] Thithan Veliyan, his son, is shown as the successor in second generation on the Uranthai throne. [3] Mudithalaikko-Perunarkilli is mentioned as the son and successor of this latter Thithan (No.2), in the third generation. [4] Velpahradakkai Purunarkilli as succeeding [No.3] in the fourth generation. [5] Uruvappahrer Ilancetcenni succeeds [No. 4] in the fifth generation. And the poet, Parinar, is assigned in this table to be the eulogist of all except the second Thithan of these five Chola kings of Uranthai in unbroken succession. This offends the above peremptory postulate which the author has himself approvingly emphasised in his book. Parinar could not possibly have adorned the courts of five successive generations of the Uranthai kings besides being in courts of Nedumceralathan, Chengutuvan and others, as well as a number of Velir chiefs such as Pehan and Neduman Anji. The only acceptable position would be that these several heroes Parinar belauds in his poems should be more or less contemporaries, and are not to be reckoned as successors surviving each other to five generations.

It is perhaps to explain away this patent and fatal objection, it is just insinuated in the Chronology and its schedule that poet Parānar only addressed the Chola kings from the third generation as a contemporary of those kings, while his verses about the earlier Chola rulers in Uranthai were only posthumous eulogiums by Parānar based on hearsay reports of their exploits. The language and nature of these poems do not afford warrant for any such differentiation. Parānar's verses about Tithan the 1st and Mudithalai-ko, *alias* Karikalan I of the Chronology, and particularly Stanza No. 6 in Aham series could only suggest contemporaneity of the poet with the hero-kings as consistently as those about the later Cholas do. Of course, Puram verses may be addressed to kings directly; whereas the poems of the Aham series by their very nature can only be indirect references to the kings. For, all direct personal references are tabooed in Aham poetry. But tenses, moods and other circumstantial indications in the Aham verses of Parānar about Thithan and his alleged grandson in the schedule so the Chronology, far from militating against the poet's contemporaneity, almost suggest it to such an extent that one may well infer that there were more than one poet by the name of Parānar in the Sangam Age. The real point is that the verses in the name of Parānar cited and relied on for the chronological pedigree do not warrant, and much less prove the author's assumptions. Even if Parānar's references to Tithan of Uranthai and to Mudithalai-ko-Perunarkilli were to be brushed aside as mere posthumous eulogies based on hearsay reports, nevertheless, according to the Chronology the astounding fact still stares us in the face, viz., Parānar belauds

personally . Pahradaikai Perunarkilli in the fourth and Ilamchetchenni in the fifth generation in the Chronology, as much as he does in Pattirruppathu the King Cheran Chenguttuvan, whom the author of the Chronology takes to be the grandson of Karikalan, who was son to Ilamchetchenni. This would make Parana a contemporary of five generations of kings, a longevity out of the range of credibility. On these facts, the theory that all the five Chola rulers of Uranthai in the first five generations in the chronological table, were uncrowned petty chiefs, and that only Karikalan in the sixth generation for the first time assumed the royal role, fails.

Moreover in the absence of their distinctive dynastic appellations such as Valavan or Killi for the Cholas, Cheliyan or Maran for Pandyas, and Cheral or Vanavan for the Cheras, the adjunct *Ko* is added to the names of kingly rulers to indicate that they are crowned monarchs of these three immemorial Tamil kingdoms, as distinct from mere ruling chiefs and feudatories who go by the names of Vels and Venmans. The names of almost all the rulers of Uranthai are spoken of in the Sangam literature, and even in the table of chronological pedigree under review, either with their respective dynastic titles or with the royal appellation of *Ko*. This fact also would militate against the conjecture that all the Uranthai rulers prior to Karikalan were only Velir chiefs without crowns.

Again, the schedule to the Chronology mentions two Karikalans, the first in the third, and the second in the sixth generation; and in support thereof some verses (Puram 65 and 66) are cited. Obviously these citations

reveal that there must be much confusion in the ordering and grouping of kings of the Chola dynasty in the schedule to the Chronology. Puram stanzas 65 and 66 specifically refer to and praise the exploits of Karikalan in the famous battle of "Venni." The poem "Porunar Arrupadai" of Mudathama Kanniyar, cited for Karikalan II in this schedule, narrates just these very exploits in Venni-battle which on the authority of Puram verses 65 and 66 the author of the Chronology attributes to his Karikalan I. It is not suggested that there were two battles in Venni, and in each the victory went to the Chola king having the same name of Karikala. The Puram verses only give the name of the Venni-victor as Karikalan; but they do not say whose son he was. "Porunar Arrupadai" expressly says that the conqueror of the other two contemporary rival crowned kings at Venni was the son of Uruva Pahrer Ilamchetchenni. The hero of Pattina Palai is neither the son of Ilamchetchenni, nor the victor of Venni battle; he is not even known as Karikalan. His real name is Perumavalavan; and he is the son of Karikalan. (*Vide* Pazhamozhi verse No. 105.) This stanza leaves no doubt as to the respective identities of and relationship between Venni-victor Karikalcholan. and the hero king immortalised in Pattina Palai. Karikalan means "he who had the burnt-foot." Karikalan earned that name because he had his foot burnt in his child-hood. *vide* the following venbas:—

1. "முச்சக் கரமு மளப்பதற்கு நீட்டியகால்
இச்சக் கரமே யளந்ததால்—செய்ச்செய்
அரிகான்மேற் தேன்றெடுக்கும் ஆய்புனனர்

கரிகாலன் கானெருப் புற்று”

(பத்துப்பாட்டு-பொருநராற்றுப்படை

முடிவிலுள்ளது)

2. ‘சுடப்பட் டுயிருந்த சோழன் மகனும்

பிடர்தலைப் பேராளைப் பெற்றுக்—கடைக்காற்

செயிரறு செங்கோல் செலீஇயினு னில்லை

உயிருடையா ரெய்தா னினை.”

(பழமொழி: 105)

This Chola king Karikalan's son was kept out of his birthright in his boyhood; and this adventurous Chola scion escaped from his captivity eluding his prisoners, and won back his ancestral Chola crown by his daring military *coup-de-main* with the aid of loyal allies. This story and happy denouncement, exquisitely eulogised in Pattina-palai, are succinctly summarised in this Pazhamozhi venba. In later times, this martial son of Karikalan was confused with his father; and their respective exploits have been indifferently mixed up by indiscriminate writers. That Pattina-palai neither names its hero as Karikalan, nor alludes to any exploits of the famous battles of Venni and Vahai which are exclusive laurels only of Karikalan—the son of Ilamchetchenni, is eloquently significant: Also the incidents of the youthful life of the victor in Venni and Vahai as given in Porunar Arrupadai are irreconcilably at variance with those of the early life of the hero of Pattina—palai. These facts were first noticed by and elaborated in a research thesis of Mahavidwan R. Raghava Iyengar of the Annamalai University: and when he drew my attention to them, I suggested to him the venba from Pazhamozhi as not only confirming his thesis *viz.*, the Pattina-palai hero was different

from Karikalan of Venni and Vahai fame, but as also affording further proof of the real relationship between these two great Chola kings as father and son.

There is yet another confusion in the Chronology between Tithan, the Chola king of Uranthai, and a Venman or chieftain of Veerai. All the citations in the Chronology in support of the identity of these different personalities except one verse from Narrinai, make no reference whatever to Veerai or Venman in relation to Tithan of Uranthai. Puram stanzas 6, 122, 352 and 395 all speak simply of "Thithan's Uranthai." with out any other adjunct. Even the Aham verse No. 226 refers only to Tithan Velian's Uranthai, and gives no warrant to connect this Tithan of Uranthai with any Venmanship of Veerai. All these poems further emphasise that Uranthai was ever the abiding capital of Tithan under his aegis, and would not admit even remotely any possible hint of his conquest or usurpation of Uranthai. Thithan is the personal name of this Chola king of Uranthai. Velian was one of his titles or surnames suggesting his conquest of "Veliam" a Chera citadel. Aham verse 359 expressly names this place as belonging to the Chera ruler. "வான் வரம்பன் வெளியத்தன்ன" Aham 208 also speaks of this 'Veliam' as being under the Chera Venman general, Aay Yeyinan "வெளியன் வேண்மான் ஆய்எயினன்". And if the Chola king Thithan conquered this Chera citadel 'Veliam,' nothing is more natural than for him to add the title 'Velian,' suggesting his martial victory over the place. Thus, Tithan or Tithan Velian were both one and the same Chola-king that ruled over Uranthai, the time-old Chola metropolis in the classic age. The Narrinai line relied on in the Chronology to identify this

Chola king with a petty Velir chief of Veerai seems to read into it a totally different story altogether. The relevant lines of this verse run as follows:—

“
 வீரை வேண்மான் வெளியன் தித்தன
 முரசுமுதற் கொளீஇய மாலை விளக்கின்,
 வெண்கோ டியம்ப நுண்பனி யரும்பக்
 கையற வந்த பொழுதொடு ”(நற்றிணை. 58)

The first line is read to mean that it is all one reference to Veerai Venman being or having become the Velian Tithan of Uranthai. That the language of this verse cannot bear this suggestion is patent on its very face. If all the words ‘Veerai Venman Veliam Tithan’ in this line go to name a single person, then the following lines are left bald and bereft of all meaning. These lines speak of some military exploit as worthy of praise. The plain and intelligible meaning of the second line here, is and could only be this “Like unto the vespertine rows of lamps lighted in commemoration of the capture of the Drum, etc., etc., etc.” Such a statement would be unmeaning, unless it were completed in sense by mentioning the victor and the vanquished in this connection, i.e., the winner and the loser of the drum, etc., mentioned in this second line here. If the entire first line were taken as referring only to one person, he may be the winner or loser of the drum and other things. The poet would give no information whatever, by leaving his lines so vaguely indefinite as to make no sense out of his lines. The first line therefore must be read to furnish all the particulars necessary to render it in accord with the second line an intelligent and intelligible allusion to some laudable event

of military exploit. The words in the first line just appear to answer to this end. Veerai Venman was the chief that perhaps vanquished another Velir chief of Veliam by name 'Tithan.' Veerai and Veliam are two seats of Velir chiefs, situated in the Chola and Chera regions respectively (Vide Aham 206 and 208) A Velir chief of Veerai perhaps won a victory over another Velir chief of Veliam, and seized his War-Drum, etc., in the battle. These lines of the Narrinai verse here refer only to this incident. The War-Drum, etc., etc., referred to in the second line were those of Thithan of Veliam seized by the Venman of Veerai. Thus read, the Narrinai verse makes cogent sense; and also shows that this Tithan who lost his Drum to the Venman chief of Veerai, a Chola feudatory was a Chera lieutenant in charge of Veliam, and had nothing whatever to do with the Chola king Tithan of Uranthai; who also once conquered Veliam perhaps, and therefore assumed the honorific surname 'Velian' to signify that victory of his. This seems to be not only more probable in the light of the many verses cited above, but also the only way to reconcile them all into harmony and accord, as well as to give sense and cogent meaning to the Narrinai stanza No. 58 cited in the Chronology.

Even were the whole of the first line in this verse were taken as referring to only one person, it is patent that this (வீரை வேண்மான் வெளியன் தித்தன்) Veerai Venman Veliyan Tithan could never have been the king of Uranthai. The epithet Venman would by itself taboo all controversy as to the status of Tithan referred to in this line. For Venman in Tamil classics would always mean only a

feudatory noble or chieftain in contradistinction to a crowned king. No king of any of the three ruling dynasties, Chera, Chola and Pandya would ever be called a Venman for the sheer reason that it would be negating the kingly status of the person styled a Venman. It would be as preposterous to expect any one of the three kings in the ancient Tamilakam to be styled as Venman as it is to call an anointed king in Europe a Baron or a Count. Vendan, Ko, and Iraivan are the words uniformly used to denote a crowned monarch; whereas a chieftain or petty prince is invariably spoken of only as Venman or Vel in the whole literature of the classic age. In this view the Narrinai verse just quoted would have to be interpreted as follows: "With the dismal evening characterized by Veerai Venman Veliyan Tithan's rows of lighted lamps, sounding-drums and blowing horns, the sharp toothed chill was also commencing its cruel work." There is nothing more however to definitely connect this Veerai Venman Veliyan Tittan of Narrinai verse 58 with the Tithan of Uranthai mentioned in stanzas 6 & 122, or with the Tithan Veliyan of verse number 152 of Ahananuru. Except that Tithan seems to be common in all these verses, the other names differ in the several references. And what is more significant is that no common incident or act is attributed by these verses to the heroes they respectively eulogise to warrant any definite and positive identity of the persons so eulogised. There is not a little of evidence either in these references or elsewhere in the Sangam classics even to suggest that the Tithan of Uranthai must have been the king of Uranthai. That this Tithan, whatever else he was, might be no king at all was conclusively shown above.

Any nobleman of repute might be associated with a great city wherein he resides. The mere phrase Tithan of Uranthi or Uranthi of Tittan would by itself be no warrant to hold that the Tithan should also be the king of Uranthai. Kudal or Madura is far famed from time immemorial to be the capital of the Pandyan kings. Poet Kapilar in Puram verse 317 associated the chief—Ahuthai, a patron of letters, with Kudal the Pandian metropolis. The lines of Kapilar run as follows:

“மணநாறு மார்பின் மறப்போர் அகுவை
குண்டுநீர் வரைப்பிற் கூடலன்ன”

[Puram. 347].

No scholar would venture to infer from these lines that Ahuthai herein referred to was either king or otherwise owner of Madura. All that the poet meant to say here is that Ahuthai was such a distinguished patron of letters and great nobleman that even the royal Pandya capital might be honoured by its being associated with his name. In any event we know for certain that in Kapilar's time Ahuthai was only a Velir Chief, and Madura or Kudal was the seat of contemporary Pandyan kings. If any one thing is clear from this discussion it is this: the Tithan of Uranthai mentioned by Paranar in his Aham verse 122 is not proved to be the king of Uranthai. Even if he were, there is no reliable and positive proofs that Veerai Venman Veliyan Tithan of the Narrinai verse was that king. On the contrary the very title Venman in the Narrinai verse would negative that contention and prove that that person, whatever else he was, could have been no king at all.

Finally, one would like to be shown some clear authority or definite reference in any Sangam classic before being asked to accept the suggestion that the 'Veerai Venman Veliyan Thithan' is to be identified with the Thithan referred to in the line "தித்தனுநத்தை" by Parinar in Agam. 122. The mere fact that an Uranthai ruler's name was Thithan will be no warrant to conclude that he must be the Venman Thithan of Veerai praised by 'Mudukurranar' in Agam. There is not only no evidence for identifying these namesakes; but there is also not the faintest hint in the whole Sangam literature even to suggest that the Veerai chief ever invaded or conquered Uranthai. That very fact that Veerai chieftain is specifically spoken of as Veerai Venman, while this distinctive appellation is dropped in the case of the Uranthai Thithan should preclude any suggestion of identity between them. They are not even spoken of by the same poet. Parinar the earliest poet sings of Uranthai Thithan, while Mudukurranar speaks of Veerai Venman. These two poets have to be reckoned as contemporaries only because the heroes they belaud are assumed to be one and the same person. This is reversing all rules of research. If the identity of their heroes is otherwise established, it may then suggest contemporaneity for the two poets who eulogise that common hero. But when neither the identity of the heroes, nor the contemporaneity of the eulogising poets is proved, it is unthinkable to build any argument for one from the other of the two unproved and probably unprovable statements.

Thus the whole argument of the Chronologist on this head against the antiquity of Tholkappiam is found to have no feet to stand on. Venman Thithan is not

proved to be the first Chola victor of Uranthai; and even if Veerai Venman were really the conqueror of Uranthai, that in itself cannot prove that there was no crown for the Uranthai rulers in those times.

There is just one more point that calls for consideration in this connection. That Uranthai was a mere Baronial seat of some electorate or petty principality, and not the capital of a kingdom before Karikalan is again an obiter, if not an ipse dixit of the author of the Chronology, and rests on no higher authority than his own surmise. On the contrary all the references in the earliest Sangam poems point to Uranthai as the Chola metropolis (*Vide* Puram stanzas 39, 58, 69, 352, 395), and the Cholanad as one of those three famous kingdoms of yore. (*Vide* Puram stanzas 13, 35, 38, 40, 61, 67, 174, 212, 382).

This writer facetiously concludes that the reference in Tholkappiam to the three Tamil kings (வண்புகழ்மூவர்) itself disproves is antiquity, because he presumes that the general phrase 'three kings' cannot refer particularly to the Tamil kings at a time "when there were seven or eleven kings and a host of them besides on a proper counting." It is difficult to divine what this author really means by this sentence. He cannot mean seriously to argue that passages in poems like "எழுவரும் வீழ்" "சோழர் குடிக்குரியோர் ஒன்பதின்மர்" refer to as many independent kings. Even in later times after the three monarchies were firmly established in Tamilakam according to this writer, eulogists praise the prowess of victors in war as having vanquished five, seven or nine rulers. Here at least these numbers must mean only as many

ruling chiefs under the suzerainty real or nominal of one or the other of the three crowned kings of Tamilakam. Not only Tholkappiam; but even Purananuru (the oldest according to the author of the Chronology) refers to three monarchs almost in language identical with that of Tholkappiam he is here animadverting upon. The parallel passages may here be compared with advantage in this connection.

Tholkappiam

வண்புகழ் முவர் தண்பொழில்
வரைப்பின்
நாற்பெயரெல்கை யகத்தவர்
வழங்கும்

(தொல். செய். சூ.391)

Purananuru

மண்டினிகிடக்கைத்
தண்டமிழ்க் கிழவர்
முரசு முழங்குதானை முவ
ருள்ளும் அரசெனப்படுவது
நினதே பெரும்

(புறம். 35)

Vide also stanza 367 of Puram to the same effect.

The author of the Chronology takes the second line of his quotation from Tholkappiam “நாற்பெயரெல்கை” as referring to the four mandalams or kingdoms of the later Tamilian history, i.e, the ancient Chera, Chola, Pandya and the later formed Thiraya or Thondai. On this assumption he concludes that Tholkappiam must have been composed only after the latest Tondai or Thiraya kingdom came into existence. In support of this argument he seems to rely on statements of Ilampuranar under this Sutram. He writes as follows:

“The political division to which the third extract refers is not at all applicable to the period of the

synchronistic tables. The commentator rightly expounds that it comprised the four major political provinces of the Tamilakam of the Tholkappianar's days, viz , Pandya mandalam, Malai (Chera) mandalam, Cholamandalam and Thondaimandalam. What we have to note in this connection is that the fourfold political division to which Tholkappianar alludes in his Sutrams is the picture of a later Tamilakam which we have no right to project into the times of the dynastic kings appearing in the synchronistic tables. Tholkappiyar's reference must be strictly construed as mirroring the conditions of a much later period in the political history of the Tamils." Perasiriyar's is acknowledged on all hands to be the standard commentary higher in authority than the Ilampuranar's for Cheyyuliyal of Tholkappiam; and Perasiriyar rightly repudiates Ilampuranar's gloss here, and interprets the Sutram in strict and logical conformity with its language which runs as follows :

“வண்புகழ் மூவர் தண்பொழில் வரைப்பின் நாற்பெய ரெல்லை யகத்து”

Perasiriyar's commentary for this is as follows :

“நாற்பெயரெல்லை யகமென்பது தமிழ்நாடென்றவாறு. வட லேங்கடந் தென்குமரியன்றிக் கிழக்கும் மேற்கும் கடலெல்லை கூறினரோ எனின் — அறியாதுகடாயினாய்; வரையறையில்- வென்று கூருதன வெல்லாங் களைந்து கொள்ளப்படுவன வல்ல; வகை கூருமையும் தமிழ் கூறப்படுங்கண்டாய்; அவர் வழங்கும் யாப்பின் வழியதென்பது, அந்நாட்டார் வழங்கும் யாப்புப்பகுதி அவை, என்றவாறு.”

This is the only meaning that will square with the explicit words in the Sutram. When Tholkappiar express-

ly says that the entire Tamilakam was ruled by "the only three" monarchs in the whole country, the adjectival phrase "நாற்பெயரெல்லை" can never mean four kingdoms. For, ex-hypothesi there were only three kingdoms. Besides the word "எல்லை" is unmistakably significant. It can only mean boundary and never a province at all. The Sutram is self-luminous. Tholkappiar here says only that the rules of prosody and poetics, he expounds in this section, strictly conform to the conventions and practices in vogue within the four boundaries of the entire Tamil country under the aegis of the three dynastic monarchs in Tamilakam. The learned author of the Chronology himself says that "one cannot immediately jump to the conclusion that there was a political province under the name Tondaimandalam in those days, for this name itself was brought into vogue at a much later date." After stating as much, he is not fair to himself to stretch the plain and explicit words of Tholkappianar "மூவர் வரைப்பின் நாற்பெயரெல்லை" so as not to refer to their natural import, viz., within the four boundaries of the entire country, belonging to the three Tamil monarchs, but to suggest something else at once unnatural and inconsistent with the language in the Sutram. Ilampuranar's reference is perfectly innocent of its historical implications. Perhaps he meant merely to say that Tholkappianar here referred to the whole Tamil Nad comprising the four provinces known in his times. He never adverted to the chronological sequence at all. He simply stated the only important fact in this connection, viz., Tholkappianar here spoke of the practices extant in the entire Tamilakam under the three monarchs. He thought he might best put it by including all the four

major provinces or mandalams known to his times to emphasise the entirety. If not, he would be stultifying himself beyond redemption. For, he believed in the great antiquity of Tholkappiam and so could not have said anything to discredit that faith of his. Here the Chronologist who chooses to torpedo Tholkappiam with an innocently inadvertent reference from Ilampuranar, ignores his express statement that what may be meant was the entire Tamilakam between Venkatam and the Kumari. This explicit statement explains Ilampuranar's intention: and his innocently inadvertent word cannot subvert the import of the expressly definite words in the Sutram. It is unnecessary to labour this point at any further length. It is clear that there is absolutely nothing in the Sutrams cited in this connection that is not in perfect harmony with the traditional antiquity of Tholkappiam.

3. The third objection to the great antiquity of Tholkappiam is founded on some Sutrams found in Marapiyal which purport to sanction and accentuate the privileges of caste by birth. The convincing answer to this objection is what appears on the very face of these fugitive Sutrams. Their contents as well as their context bear unimpeachable testimony to their fabrication and foisting at some later period. The 15 Sutrams which purport to speak of the four castes and their birthrights are sandwiched between Sutrams 69 and 86 in Marapiyal. This highly incongruous and inappropriate situation is self-suggestive. Tholkappiam scrupulously follows the most perfectly scientific method and system of treatment throughout. But in this instance, if these Sutrams were

genuine, Tholkappiar must be deemed guilty of a strange and inexcusable lapse. For, all the Sutrams upto 69 speak of conventions regarding animal life, and all from 85th and after refer to the vegetable kingdom. What is the appropriateness in wedging between them these 15 Sutrams about the places and privileges of the four castes of men based on birth? These might well have preceded the Sutrams relating to the beasts, or followed those dealing with the plants. In fact, if ever Tholkappiyanar intended to incorporate these in his great grammar, he could have placed them immediately after Sutram No.33 which refers to mankind as standing at the top of the scale of all living things. That Sutram comes in the regular course of climax in gamut of life.

Again, if there were four castes in Tamilakam in Tholkappiyanar's times, surely they should have been referred to with other classifications of the Tamil people detailed in the Agattinaiyiyal and Purattinaiyiyal. None but the Brahmans are there spoken of, and they are treated as of a different race and culture. But the Tamil people are always mentioned only in their regional or vocational divisions. Not a single reference to Kshatriyas, to Vaisyas or even to Vellalas as a caste appears anywhere in Tholkappiam except in this ramshackle context in Marapiyal. The names Kshatriya and Sudra are carefully left over in these 15 Sutrams. This scrupulous avoidance of the word "Sudra", the name of the fourth caste of the Aryan social system is eloquently significant. Vellalas in Tamilakam were a respected sect in the post-Tholkappiyam age. They formed the highest rank among the Tamil people. The interpolators, whoever

they may be, of these 15 Sutrams, dared not speak of any Tamil class as the ignoble Sudras. They therefore slyly referred to the fourth class as "Vellalas". As this was a respected name, the Tamils would raise no serious protest at the time. Another difficulty also was smoothed over by the authors of these interpolated Sutrams. The fourth caste among the Aryans formed the servile class. But the Vellalas in Tamilakam were of the proudest rank. So, in stating the pursuits and vocations of the four Varnas in these 15 Sutrams, their author takes care to confuse them between the last two—Vanigars and Vellalas. The fact of the matter is that in the Tamil country at no time were any such castes as Vaisiyas or Kshatriyas. The Arasars are actual rulers, and the Brahmans claim to be of non-Tamil Aryan extraction. Tholkappiyam repeatedly proclaims that it deals exclusively with the actual conditions of the Tamils alone as were in vogue in the Tamilakam of that age or epoch. And if ever any Aryan institution or usage is referred to for parallel illustration, the Sutram says as much, and never leaves it in doubt as to whether it was Aryan or Tamil. In the face of these facts, these 15 fugitive Sutrams can only be spurious interpolations by some later writers to make it appear that this oldest classical grammar gives sanction and countenance to the four Varnas of the Aryan sociology in Tamilakam. It is thus clear that these 15 Sutrams, on whose incongruity the Chronologist hangs an objection to the antiquity of Tholkappiyam, are irrelevant interpolations of a later date. The very fact that Tholkappiyam does not refer to any existence of the four Varnas or castes by birth among the Tamils in the Agam and Puram chapters, is a proof that it was composed at a

very early epoch in the history of Tamil Literature when the caste-system was unknown and unfamiliar to the Tamil society.

Moreover, it is clear that these Sutrams in the "Marapiyal", assigning pursuits and privileges to the four castes, do not offer any irreconcilable opposition to the antiquity of Tholkappiyam even if they were genuine. The four fold caste-system is a very old institution in the Brahman or Vedic or Aryan culture. The four classes mentioned in these Sutrams really existed — though not by birth, — and exercised their useful function in the social economy of the Tamils as much in the pre — Purananuru as in the post — Purananuru times. Vellalas or agriculturists, Vanigars or traders, Arasars or rulers, and Andanars or priestly Brahmans were all well - known social units in the Tamilakam of yore. The author of the Chronology himself admits that "the few Aryans who first came into the Tamil country were of the religious order. There was a small sprinkling of secular Brahmans also (in the Tamil country of the Purananuru age) who pursued some handicraft work or other." Tholkappiyam does frequently refer to both these sections. It speaks of the higher order of the priestly Brahmans as "Andanars", and of the secular Brahmans as "Parpars". The very fact that the rulers and noblemen in Tamilakam invited these priestly Brahmans to perform Yagams for them and heaped honours and estates on them, as is admitted in the several verses in the old Puram or Aham collections, proves that these religious and social notions of the Aryans were not only known, but were not even averse to the Tamils of the Puram and Aham epochs. To aspire for the benefits of Yag-

ams and to actually resort to their costly performances—a fact observed not only on the part of the Tamil monarchs, but also among noblemen in the country—would reveal not a mere acquaintance with, but also a considerable assimilation of the Aryan practices and culture by the Tamils in the times of the Puram and Aham verses to which the Chronology assigns the oldest age. This in its turn should indicate that Brahmans must have lived long enough in Tamilakam from prior to this classic age to familiarise and persuade the civilised Tamils to acquiesce in and partially adopt these Aryan notions. Books like Purananuru and Ahananuru, Padirrupattu and Pattupattu, which the Chronology assigns to an earlier pre-Tholkappiam era, all of them bear testimony to the performance of Yagam by the ruler and citizens in Tamilakam; whereas Tholkappiyam has not a single reference to the practice of Yagam by any non-Brahman Tamil. In this view Tholkappiyam should imply, if anything, an earlier age when the Tamils might have been merely hospitable witnesses to the practices of the Brahman settlers in their midst, quietly observing and good-naturedly not objecting to these Aryans having their own ways which were not the ways of the Tamils in those days. And as the extant Sangam literature familiarly refers to the performance of Yagams as a common practise among the Tamil rulers and the rich and aspiring nobles in Tamilakam, it should bespeak of a much later post-Tholkappiam age. It may well be that Tholkappiam in these Marapiyal Sutrams is just drawing a parallel from the Aryan culture to the four classes of people in Tamilakam without any implication whatever that the Aryan Varnas existed in the Tamil

country. This tendency to draw comparisons with the parallel Aryan practices and precepts is quite a common feature in Tholkappiyam. The reference to the Gandharva union as a close parallel to "Kalavu" practice of the Tamils in Kalaviyal, and the mention of the Brahmanic Siksha rules and standards of phonetic measures and sound sources of the alphabetic letters in contrast to those of the Tamil grammar in Pirappiyal are instances in point. These will only point to a fair acquaintance with the Aryan culture and learning on the part of the Tamil scholars and nothing more. This contact and acquaintance of the Tamils with the Aryans is just discernible in Tholkappiyam; but it is the Sangam poetry, for which the Chronology fondly claims pristine purity and priority, that breathes not a mere acquaintance with, but also a considerable assimilation and adoption of Aryan notions and practices by the Tamil people of that age, and thus affords unimpeachable internal evidence of that poems being later and post-Tholkappiyam works. The Sutram cited for the third objection is simply permissive. It only says that to rule over lands is not taboo to the Andanars or spiritually evolved Brahmans. It does not even speak of Brahmans in the Tamilakam being rulers. This may be a mere reference to the parallel social standard in the Aryan system to show the position and privileges of the Brahmans in that system to which there need not have been any bar in Tamilakam also.

4. The fourth objection to the antiquity on Tholkappiyam is based on Sutram 5, Agattinai iyal. This Sutram need not frighten or distress any Tamilian at all. The same explanations which harmonise the Marapiyal

Sutrams discussed above in dealing with objection No. [3] will reconcile this Sutram as well with the early age of Tholkappiyam. The author of the Chronology has no real objection to any reference to the gods mentioned in this Sutram. For, he admits that all the collections of his own choice contain verses relating to most of these deities. His only objection is to the regional distribution of these deities in Tholkappiyam and particularly to the position assigned to "Varuna" in this Sutram. If once the gods were admitted to be familiar deities in the old Tamilakam, there can be no objection to their correlation with the regional topography. Muruga, Mayon, Indra, and Varuna are the favourites or *Adi devata*s in the hills, pasture lands, urban and maritime areas respectively as much in the Aryavartha as in the Tamilakam. This Sutram, if anything would be even a more unexceptionable parallel reference than those in the Pirappiyal and Kalaviyal of Tholkappiyam. The point as to whether these four were ancient Aryan gods domiciled in Tamilakam, or were indigenous Dravidian deities incorporated in the Aryan pantheon is yet an open question. The recent thesis of Western scholars suggest that even Vishnu and Varuna and Indra are of Dravidian origin. We need not go so far to harmonise this Sutram with its great age in Tamil literary history. There is nothing on record in the works admitted to the claim of antiquity in the Chronology to militate against Tholkappiar's reference in this connection; but there is everything to support the reference to these deities in this Sutram in Tholkappiyam. Verses in the Agam and Puram collections, Pattupattu and other Tamil poems do refer to one and all of these

deities, and always in special reference to their favourite regional locations. Tholkappiyam simply reflects the myths and the faith current in Tamilakam.

5, The final and fifth shaft in the Chronology is the familiar old stock-in trade argument founded on the word (ஓரை) Orai in Tholkappiyam. The late lamented and leaned Mr. Swamikannu Pillay almost canonized this fetish. But no one tackled this gorgon scare-crow seriously so far. We generally accept the argument as axiomatic truth; and naturally on that footing we find no answer to this objection. The whole history of this argument is a fine instance of the power of auto-suggestive self-stultifying hypnotism. We are often over-powered by mere sound similarity; and we then flounder helplessly in irretrievable errors. What is the proved philological connection between the Greek 'Hora' and the Tamil 'Orai' (ஓரை). So far as I know no one has given any convincing answer to this obvious elementary question. Until this connection is first conclusively established, it is idle to speculate on the origin or the fancied kinship of this Tamil word. It is unprofitable and even dangerous to enter upon endless and hair-splitting controversies.

In the first place it is said by competent Greek, savants that the original import of "Hora" in Greek had nothing to do with the divisions of a day's time at all; only in its later and secondary stage this Greek word was adopted to mean a part of a day. In Sanskrit there is no word corresponding to this Tamil word (ஓரை) in sense as well as sound. "Ahorathram" in Sanskrit can have no connection whatever to "Orai" in Tamil. Were

it necessary to dogmatise a foreign origin to this word "Orai" in Tamil, it may as well have come directly into Tamilakam from Greece, and need not require a Sanskrit transporting agency for its transmission. For, it is a well-known fact of history that there was direct intercourse between Tamilakam and the Grecian and Roman countries from pre-historic times. But why this superstition that the Tamils could have had no indigenous culture of any kind, and every Tamil word for even elementary notions of time and space divisions should be of foreign origin? To argue that borrowing was always the lot of Tamil, and to lend words and notions is ever the monopoly of the Aryan dialects is the order of the day. Dr. Caldwell has pricked this bubble decades ago and has laid the ghost to rest, it is to be hoped. Even the proud Sanskrit is now proved not to have disdained loans and even gifts from Tamil. "Orai" may well be an indigenous Tamil word from the beginning of time. As Sanskrit has no word to correspond to the Tamil "Orai" in sense and sound, it is all the more reason why it should be a pure Tamil word. Kizhamai (கிழமை), Nal (நாள்), Thingal (திங்கள்), Andu (ஆண்டு) are all pure Tamil words, and there is no insuperable impediment in believing that "Orai (ஓரை) also may be of Tamil origin. The contention is that the Tamils could not have evolved for themselves any advanced astronomical knowledge and should therefore have only borrowed the words with the nations of astronomical science. Even if this extraordinary and perverse proposition were conceded for argument's sake, it need not entail the foreign origin of the word (ஓரை). For it involves no advanced or technical astronomical notion whatever. If "Orai" meant merely

some part of a day's time set apart as suitable for certain rites and rituals, this requires no great astronomical attainments for anyone to entertain this idea, or to frame a word to express it. "Orai" may thus be a Tamil word; and the endless speculation about its origin will have no solution; for, it needs none at all.

Secondly, apart from all this, this meaning of "Orai" in the Tholkappiyam is not conclusively established. It is a fundamental canon that the meaning of a word must be first ascertained definitely before any controversy is raised about its origin. The Sutram reads as follows:

“மறைந்த வொழுக்கத் தோரையும் நாளும்
குறந்த வொழுக்கம் கிழவோற் கில்லை”

(தொல். களவி : 44)

It is the commentators of the modern age that first interpreted the word "Orai" here as meaning a muhurtham or auspicious part of a day. There is nothing in the whole of Tholkappiyam to hold that this word is employed only in this astronomical or astrological sense here in this Sutram. The Sutram proceeds to emphasise only this simple truth viz., while men may not forsake all other attractions and diverse distractions even in their love, women unlike men would crave for nothing but their love. Neither the nature and normal functions of the day, nor the fondest amusements and sports would distract women from their all-absorbing love. The plain meaning of this Sutram is that men in love do not forsake all other attractions of the day as well as their wonted sports and plays. The implication is that women in love do so, because love to them is their very existence, while to men love is merely a thing of joy. The language

of the Sutram is plain as a pike staff. The word "Orai" meaning pastime or play is as old as the Tamil literature. At first it simply signified sport or play in common. But as after childhood and youth, men ordinarily cease to interest themselves in amusements as civilization advances while women ever revel in them throughout their life, the word "Orai" by selective principle came to be applied in later times to the pastimes and amusements of women folk. Tholkappiyam in the earliest unsophisticated Tamilian era uses this word to express sports or 'plays, which men in their amphibious, attenuated and moderated love do not give up even for their love. The later day commentator who came nearly fifteen hundred years after this classic grammar, imported into this Sutram the astrological meaning of this word. While the original text gives no countenance to this view and while it admits of a fairly uncontroversial meaning, it will be doing violence first to give a new import and then to build a load of argument against the age of the book itself all based on unproved one-sided assumption. It is an instance of giving the dog a bad name to hang him.

CONCLUSION

Thus we have now some positive evidences which prove that Purananuru and Tholkappiam go back at least to five hundred B.C. if not, even farther down. And these books of yore all refer to the Royal house of the Cheras as already a hoary pre-historic dynasty in Tamilaham. The great antiquity of the Chera dynasty is thus found to be proved as much by references in irrefutable foreign records as also by unchallengeable proofs from the Tamil classics of yore. It goes back to as remote a past as at least 1,000 B. C.

PART II

THE CHERA KINGDOM AND ITS CAPITAL CITY

1

DIFFERENT THEORIES

There has been a controversy among scholars as regards the Identity of the ancient Chera Dominion and of Vanchi their royal capital. This dispute is relatively of recent origin, and is the result of remarks and conjectures of some research scholars of repute in reference to the identity and topography of the famous old metropolitan city of the early Cheras. Mr. Kanakasabai Pillai in his Essays known as "The Tamils 1,800 years ago" suggested that Karur, the present pettyinland place

on the river Periyar near the hills was the old Vanchi. He held this opinion on some plausible reasons. The famous old Chera capital stood on the Periyar River. That was also known as 'Karuvur'. Mr. Pillai was persuaded by the facts that the present inland village Karur is on the river Periyar; and that it is in the Cheranad. He thought perhaps the name 'Karur' is only a contracted form of 'Karuvur' another name for 'Vanchi'. But both traditions and facts dispute his view and effectively disprove it. There is no shred of evidence to prove this village was in existence for over 2,000 years or to conclude that its name Karur had anything whatever to do with the classic 'Karuvur', and much less with 'Vanchi' the more frequently used name of the old Chera capital. The people in and about this village Karur have no legend, no recollection of any traditions to connect it with the far-famed ancient city of the Cheras. More than all this, that it is inland far away from the sea is fatal to Mr. Kanakasabai Pillai's conjecture. The ancient Vanchi was a port and a maritime city at the mouth of the river Periyar as will be presently shown.

There is another theory suggesting the identity of the modern town Karur in the Trichinopoly District with the ancient Karuvur or Vanchi of the Cheras of the classic age. This view was first suggested by Pandit M. Raghava Iyengar of the Tamil Lexicon Office of the Madras University and was supported by some other scholars since. This lacks even the one advantage which Mr. Kanakasabai Pillai found in support of his view, in the fact that the Kerala village of Karur at least stands on the river Periyar. But Karur in the Trichinopoly

District has no river near it at all; and what is much worse, it is not even in the intervening border state of Kongu, but is in the Eastern Cholanad, over 300 miles east of the Western Ghats. Ordinarily for these reasons alone such a theory should have received no further notice, and would have been summarily rejected but for the position and connection of its protagonists. Learned and polemical dissertations and discursive disquisitions of Pandits with an extravagant display of erudition have taken research scholarship by storm and have only served to make confusion worse confounded, particularly among students of history whose complacent contempt for the classics is only matched by their colossal ignorance of them which really caused that contempt. Scholars who make historical research are notoriously out of touch with the Tamil classics. They not only fight shy of the old Tamil classics; they proudly blind themselves to all light available from the old poems, holding as a postulate that all poetry must be spurious history. This is a superstition which has cost Indian History very dearly. Ancient classical Tamil poetry is in my opinion as staunch an ally of true history as archaeology and for inquiries into the remotest past untouched and unapproachable by archaeology, is often the only available resource and reliable guide. Rich rewards surely await inquirers who would tap these hitherto unexplored and almost inexhaustible mines and repositories of old histories. Our enquiries about the Cheras of the classic age only start from the dawn of history in about the 1st and 2nd centuries A. D. and grope back into the dark recesses of the more distant and remoter past. There is no sunny light of history, nor any moonbeams of Archaeo-

logy to dispel the perpetual night that palls and shrouds those regions. The steady stars of the ancient poems scintillate in these transpolar realms. But they would suffice to guide our faltering steps, if only we learn to familiarise our mind's eyes to these stars. People used only to the dazzling lamps of the saloons may of course find the still dark night on the outskirts of the city very appalling and the twinkling stars in the sky serving in their case only to make the bleak impenetrable darkness visible. But the shepherds accustomed to the starry heavens would count his sheep unerringly with that light. Moreover the very frozen fields of ice of these classics of olden times serve to preserve facts of prehistoric periods, amazingly well. They do not fester or decompose under the torrid and malignant rays of warring passions and jarring jealousies ambitious attractions and destructive animosities of the races of later times. At least for the enquiries about the Cheras of the classic age, I found the Tamil classics not merely helpful, but also abundantly rich to yield a good harvest to every sickleman. And I shall endeavour to briefly review the results of my studies of the Tamil classics bearing upon the controversy as regards the homelands and capital city of the Cheras of yore.

THE CHERANAD OR DOMINIONS OF THE ANCIENT CHERA KINGS

Pandit M. Raghava Iyengar says "the old Cheranad comprised the modern districts of Salem and Coimbatore in the eastern plains as well as Malabar and Cochin in the plateau between the Western ghats and the Arabian Sea... .. They covered five out of the twelve old provinces of Tamilakam, viz. Kuttam, Kudam, Karka, Poozhi and Maladu... .. The area occupied by the Salem and Coimbatore Districts was from yore known always as Kongunad.

And it is the possession of this Kongunad by immemorial right that earned the Chera kings one of their titles, viz.. Kongan or Kongar ko (Lord of Kongu)". (*Vide* Chap. 12. p. 155, 2nd edition of "Cheran Chenguttuvan"). That Salem and Coimbatore always formed the Kongunad is an unchallengable fact of history as much as of the Tamil Literature. Whether this Kongunad was always a territory or province of the Chera kingdom is the question at issue still unsettled among the research scholars. The hero of the Pandit's book is the famous Chera warrior King Chenguttuvan. King Kalangai kanni Narmudicheral the hero of the 4th canto of Pathiruppattu was only Chenguttuvan's step-brother according to the Pandit, though I hold they were cousins of the first degree. King Palyanai Chelkuzhu Kuttuvan—the hero of the 3rd canto of Pathiruppattu was the uncle of both these cousins. If Kongunad belonged to and formed part of the Chera kingdom as of yore and by dynastic right, it should be strange indeed for these Chera kings to seek laurels by severally invading and conquering this Kongunad; and much less for laying it waste by pillage and plunder. And yet we learn from the Tamil classics of this age that every one of these great old Chera kings not only led military expeditions into the Kongunad, but also plumed themselves with the proud title of Conqueror or Vanquisher of Kongunad. I shall give here a few quotations which conclusively establish this fact.

- (1) "மாகெழுக்கொங்கர் தாடகப் படுத்த
வேல்கெழு தாளை வெருவரு தோன்றல்"
(Pathiruppattu. Stz. 22)

"O! Dreaded king, commander of the armies that conquered the territories of the great lords of Kongu"

(2) King Chenguttuvan himself is said to have fought a great battle in a bloody field of Kongars and vanquished them and their allied armies with the Chola and Pandya flags.

“நும்போல் வேந்தர் நும்மோடிகலிக்
கொங்கர் செங்களத்துக் கொடுவரிக் கயற்கொடி
பகைப்புறத்துத் தந்தன ராமினும் ஆங்கவை
திசைமுக வேழத்தின் செவியகம் புக்கன”

(Chilappadikaram, Chap. 25, Katchi Kathai, II. 152-155).

(3) Again King Ilam cheral Irumporai is praised for his victory over the Kongars by the poet Perumkunrur Kizhar.

“விரவுப்பனை முழங்கு நிரைதோல் வரைப்பின்
உரவுக்களிற்று வெல்கொடி நுடங்கும் பாசறை
யாரெயி றலைத்த கல்கால் கவனை
நாரறி நறவிற் கொங்கர் கோவே”

(Pathirruppattu, Stz. 88)

These several invasions and expeditionary campaigns of the successive Chera kings into the Kongunad prove that far from being a hereditary province of the Chera kingdom, Kongunad was always an independent state or principality and that Kongars or the rulers of Kongunad were often vanquished but never subdued by any of the martial monarchs wearing the Chera crown. There are also references in the classics to prove that suzerainty was claimed over this Kongunad often by the Pandya Kings and less frequently by the Cholas as well. For, this fertile region touched on her borders all these

three kingdoms. Yet for all this Kongunad ever remained a separate state under her own rulers, often courted by one or the other of the three crowned kings as allies in their battles against their rival monarchs. This fact is also confirmed by positive references in the classic poems to the chiefs and ruling princes of Kongunad as contemporaries of great Chera monarchs. Chenguttuvan is admittedly the greatest of the early Chera kings; he had a consuming passion for martial glory, for he was incessantly fighting with all his contemporaries far and near. Not satisfied with his victories over all the neighbouring kings and rulers in South India, he led an expedition even against the north Aryan chiefs as far as the Himalayan mountains.

“வடதிசை எல்லை இமய மாக
தென்னங் குமரியொட டாமிடை யரசர்
சொல்பல நாட்டைத் தொல்கவி னழித்த
போரடு தானைப் பொலந்தார்க் குட்டுவன்”

(Pathirruppatu, stz. 43)

And the rich and invitingly fertile Kongu lay temptingly close on the eastern border of his powerful kingdom. Yet he deemed the rulers of Kongu to be great and independent enough to be invited to his court along with such independent foreign potentates as the Malawa monarch and the Ceylon king, Gayavahu. That the Kongu Princes were held to be of equal rank with these kings and were also the honoured guests of Chenguttuvan in the festive occasion when he dedicated a temple to Kannaki is mentioned by that king's royal brother, Ilango himself in his great masterpiece—the superb epic of Chilappadikaram. [Vide]:-

“உலக மன்னவன் தின்றோன் முன்னர்
 அருஞ்சிறை நீங்கிய ஆரிய மன்னரும்
 பெருஞ்சிறைக் கோட்டம் பிரிந்த மன்னரும்
 குடகக் கொங்கரு மாளுவ வேந்தரும்
 கடல்கு ழிலங்கைக் கயவாகு வேந்தனும்
 “எந்நாட் டாங்க ணிமைய வரம்பனின்
 நன்னாட் செய்த நாளணி வேள்வியில்
 வந்தீ கெ”ன்றே வணங்கினர் வேண்டத்
 தந்தேன் வரமென் நெழுந்த தொருகுரல்”

[Chilappadikaram,30-Varantharukathai, II, 156-169]

That Kongu was always an independent buffer state lying between the western Cheras and the eastern Cholas is also proved by the following references in Periapuranam, composed by Sekkilar-the poet minister of the Cholas in their palmiest days. He says that the king Cheramanperumal had to cross and recross the intervening independent Kongunad in possession of her own valourous martial sons when the Chera king visited his saintly friend Sundarar in Thiruvavarur in the Cholanad and when after his visit he returned to his own hereditary home of the hills- the Malainad of the Cheras.

“அந்நாட் டெல்லை கடந்தனைய அமைச்சர்க் கெல்லாம் விடையருளி

.....

கொன்னார் அயில்வேல் மறவர்பயில் கொங்கர் நாடு கடந்தருளிப்

பொன்னாட்டவரும் அணைந்தாடும் பொன்னி தீர்நாட் டிடைப் போவார்”

[Peria Puranam,Stz,50 of Seraman Perumal Nayanar Puranam].

Again says Sekkilar :

“கொங்குநாடு கடந்துபோய்க் குலவுகிநாட் டெல்லியுற”
(Ibid, Stz. 141)

This is again reiterated in stanzas 4,14,22,27,28 and 32 of Vellaiyanai Charukkam of Periapuranam. Pandit Raghava Iyengar attempts to get round these unchallengeably conclusive references by suggesting that the Cheras of these times perhaps lost all their territories including Kondunad east of the Ghats and retreated to their Malainad province west of the Western Ghats and that Sekkilar spoke only of this shrunken Chera kingdom, which in the age of the classics, according to the Pandit, extended to and included the Kongu region. But this ingenuous sophistry is also negated by Poet Kovur Kizhar in his old poem which is in Purananuru the oldest of the classical sangam poetry. This poem eulogises the Chola king, Killi Valavan, who invaded the Chera kingdom, and laid seine to the old Chera capital Vanchi in their Malainad. As the Germans violated the neutrality of Belgium in their invasion of France, this Chola king at the head of his forces traversed the buffer state of Kongu violating its neutrality and vanquishing its resistance on his way to the ancient mountain Chera kingdoms always known as Malainad (the mountain country) and Kudapulam (western region).

“மைத்த ராடிய மயங்குபெருந் தானைக்
கொங்கு புறும்பெற்ற கொற்றவேந்தே!

.....

வேந்துபுறங் கொடுத்த வீந்துபுகு பறந்தலை
மர்ட மயங்கெரி மண்டிக் கோடிறு
புகுமெறி மலையீ னிருநிலஞ் சேரச்

சென்றோன் மன்ற..... ..

..... ..

வஞ்சி முற்றம் வயக்கள னாக

அஞ்சா மறவா ராட்போ ரழித்துக்

கொண்டனை பெரும குடபுலத் ததர்”

(Puram Stz. 373)

This Killi Valavan was a cousin or nephew of Cheran Chenguttuvan, who, the Pandit says in his biography of this hero king, ruled over Kongu regions as the principal province of his Chera kingdom and whose capital city of Vanchi lay in the eastern extremity of this Kongu territory almost where it touches the pulse of Cholanad. The poet Kovur Kizhar's reference just cited is a direct personal address to his contemporary Chola king, Killivalavan. This poet was also a contemporary of poet Parinar. For both these bards took part in effecting a reconciliation between their pation chief Pehan and his wife Kannaki by their persuasive metrical addresses (*Vide* Stzs. 144, 145 of Parinar and Stz. 147 of Kovur Kizhar in Pura-nanuru).

If as suggested by the Pandit, the city of Vanchi was in the age of Chenguttuvan and his successors in the eastern extremity of Kongunad near modern Trichinopoly, the Chola king Killivalvan could not have traversed all the Kongu region and crossed the ghats to lay seige to Vanchi in the Kudapulam. Kovur Kizhar's poem leaves not a shadow of doubt that Killivalavan had to traverse Kongunad, and to reach the "wide mountain country surrounded by high hills whose tops are often split by the thunderbolts of the rainclouds", before he staggered and shocked the Kudapulam or Chera kingdom by

beseiging Vanchi, the royal capital of that ancient kingdom. This ancient poet's description of the route of this ambitious Chola invader, the definite reference to the Chera kingdom as Kudapulam in the midst of high cliffed mountains of the Ghats, and to the situation of the Chera capital Vanchi in that region besieged by the hostile Chola King in this stanza in Purananuru are all as lucid and unmistakable as positive and definite in their significance. There is no escape from the irresistible conclusion they lead to viz., that the Chera Kingdom of yore did not extend to or include Kongunad, but that it only comprised the picturesque and fertile valleys in the lap of the cloud-tipped hills of the Western Ghats and hence, ever known as 'Malainad' and 'Kudapulam'

The Sangam poet, Sathanar, in his epic poem known as Manimekalai expressly says that Malainadu properly so called was solely the family or dynastic dominion of the great western Chera King Chenguttuvan.

“செங்குட்டுவன் எனுஞ் செங்கோல் வேந்தன்
பூத்த வஞ்சி பூவா வஞ்சியிற்
போர்த்தொழிற் ருனை குஞ்சியிற் புனைய
நிலநா டெல்லை தன்மலை நாடென்ன
செம்பொன் வாகையும் சேர்த்திய சேரன்”

Pandit Raghava Iyengar and scholars of his school freely admit that 'Malainadu' comprises only the west coast valleys between the Ghats and the sea and that Kongunad which they believe to have also formed part of the old Chera kingdom, was never known as nor included in Malainad, but was a separate and extensive territory east of the Ghats now covered by the Salem and Coimbatore Districts. (*Vide* Chap. 2, page 155 and

156 of 'Cheran Chenguttuvan'). And all the Sangam poets uniformly refer only to the maritime Malainad in the west coast as the Chera dominion, and Kongunad east of the Ghats remained throughout the age of the Sangam Classics outside the Cheras' sphere and under its own rulers virtually independent of the Cheras. The Chera kingdom of yore therefore was ever the Malainad of the west coast and its normal limits did not extend east of the Ghats.

Some arguments based upon the names found in certain inscriptions in Karur temple are advanced in support of the suggestion that Kongunad might have been the main part of the Cheramandalam in times of yore "Keratanthaka Valanadu" and 'Chola Keralamandalam' are some names mentioned in these inscriptions to describe the country surrounding Karur. From these names it is argued that these tracts should once have belonged to the Kerala or Chera Kings. 'Keralantaka' means "he who deals death to the Keralas". Obviously this name can only suggest that some one who owned this territory was so hostile to the Cheras as to be proud of being reckoned as their mortal enemy. That is exactly the real truth and origin of this name for this part of country which is on the eastern border of Kongunad. The territory called Keralandaka Valanadu in these inscriptions in Karur temple extend from Uranthai to Karur. Uranthai, the celebrated ancient capital of the Cholas of the classic times, is now the eastern suburb of the modern municipal town of Trichinopoly. No student worthy of his books would suggest that Uranthai was ever under Chera rule. Yet this land came to be christened Keralanthaka Valanad, The reason is this: The Chola

King Raja Rajan reigned and ruled over the Cholanad in the tenth century A.D. He was a warrior king proud of parading his conquests. Among the many pompous titles he assumed, the heraldic epithet or appellation of Keralantaka is one. His proclamations make this fact perfectly clear. He delighted to call himself the monarch of the Cheras, his rival rulers in Kūdapulam or west coast. The Tamil name Chera was sanskritized into Kerala. Hence Raja Rajan's martial pride blazoned his heraldics with this new title of Keralandakar. In the same vein Rajaraja gave himself another title Pandya Kulasani pompously to suggest that he was the thunderbolt to the rival royal house of the Pandyas in the south, 'Asani' means a bolt from the blue. And any title which a monarch is fond of is easily passed to some country or city by his people to please him. This Chola king Raja Rajan reigned in Tanjore in the 10th and 11th centuries A. D. A strip of land around Tanjore was called the Pandyakulasani Valanadu to commemorate the new title fondly assumed by the king. Yet no one would venture to infer that this territory round Tanjore must ever have been under the sway of the Pandyan kings, because it came to be known as Pandyakulasani Valanadu. Similarly the pompous new title Keralantaka assumed by Raja Rajan in the 10th century A.D. baptized this part of his kingdom from Uraiyur to Karur by this proud new appellation of his. And the later inscriptions in Karur temple naturally referred to this part of the Cholanad by the new name given to it in and after Raja Raja's time.

Its other name "Chola Keralamandalam" also is of similar origin. Raja Raja's successor Kulottunga III reigned in the 12th century A. D. One of the new heral-

dic titles he assumed was 'Cholakeralan' to signify that he was by his military exploits the lord of both the Chola and Kerala or Chera countries. This would indicate only the vanity of Kulottunga III. Neither was he, nor any other Chola king ever the ruler of Kerala country any more than any Chera king could claim to have ruled over any part of the Chola kingdom at any time. Because Kulottunga III called himself "Chola kerela" this area round Karur which was part of his (Cholas) kingdom came also to be called 'Cholakerala mandalam' to perpetuate the new title of this Chola king. These names given to this part of Chola country in the 11th and 12th centuries A. D. to commemorate vainglorious titles of the Chola kings cannot warrant any inference as to the early history of the Cheras or their relation to this region in the Cholanad. There is thus nothing to disturb the truth, established by the Tamil classics and the foreign records of ancient European travellers, viz., the early Cheras held sway from time immemorial in their Malainad or Home of Hills in the rich and beautiful valleys between the Western Ghats and the Arabian sea.

THE ANCIENT CAPITAL CITY OF THE CHERA KINGS

I shall now try to marshal up the available evidences from the early Tamil classics to locate and identify the site of Vanchi, the ancient capital of the Cheras in the classic period. Pandit M Raghava Iyengar of the Madras University Tamil Lexicon Office, and his cousin Mahavidwan K. Raghava Iyengar of Ramnad, now a Lecturer in the Tamil Research section in the Annamalai University maintain that the modern Karur near Trichinopoly was the Cheras' Vanchi of yore. Their main arguments in support

of their thesis are these — [1] Karuris near a stream now known as Aamravathy : and the Cheras' Vanchi is described in the old classical poems as lying on the great Periyar river also known as Aan porunai: and the Chera river Aan porunai must be identified with this rivulet Aamravathy a tributary of the River Kaviri in the Cholanad. [2] The ancient poems don't refer to Vanchi as a seaport and some poems refer to Vanchi by its other name Karuvur; therefore the old Vanchi must be the inland Karur near Trichinopoly. (3) Old Vanchi was also called Karuvur by some Sangam poets; and the modern Karur is christened as Vanchularanyam by the anonymous author of Karur Thala Puranam, a book of fables recently composed to sanctify this modern town.

Those who maintain that the Modern Karur was the old Vanchi would feel the ground under their feet slipping away, when Kongu regions or any country near Karur and east of the Ghats is proved as has been proved in the previous section, never to have formed part of the ancient Chera kingdom. For, Karur is in the western extremity of the Cholanad, near the border of Kongunad and over 300 miles east of the Western Ghats. The time-old capital of the Cheras' Malainad which ended with the Ghats could not be 300 miles away from the kingdom, and what is worse, in the heart of a foreign country ruled by rival Chola kings and hostile Kongu chiefs. That is why they endeavour to prove that the old Kongunad and even a part of the Cholanad where the modern Karur is situate was part of the Chera kingdom. This thesis of theirs has just been shown to be untenable. And it will be presently seen that Karur is not even in the Kongu territory, but is a town in the western border of Cholanad,

which has sprung into importance only in the medieval times from about the 7th century A. D. This Karur was either non-existent, or of such insignificance in those early times as to be entirely unknown to the old classics.

In the first place, the author of Chenguttuvan's prose biography was himself constrained to admit that this Karur not only lies in the Cholanad, but even became the Chola capital in the 10th century A. D.

“பிற்காலத்திற் சோழரது ஆதிக்கம் பெருகியபோது, கரு-
வூர் சோனுட்டின் முக்கிய நகரங்களுள் ஒன்றானசெய்தி
சாஸனங்களாலும் நூல்களாலும் தெரிகின்றது”

[P. 131, Cheran Chenguttuvan 1915 edition].

It is thus conceded that Karur was one of the principal capital cities of the Chola kings in the Cholanad in the 10th century, A. D. Only the Pandit adds a gloss of his own by way of warily qualifying this admission. He says this Chola connection for Karur started in later time [பிற்காலத்தில்]. If it were the Chera capital at any time when and how the Cholas got it from the Cheras could not even be suggested by these scholars. On the contrary Poet Sekkilar, who was himself the Chief-Minister of King Anapaya Chola having access to the Chola Court records and the archives composed his great master-piece—Periapuranam early in the 12th century A. D., in Stanza 2 of the canto called Eripatta Nayanar Puranam in this book says that this karur or “Karuvur was a time-old great Chola City and belonged hereditarily to the royal ancestors of king Anapayan from time immemorial in their own right.

“மன்னிய அநபாயன்சீர் மரபின்மா நகரமாகும்
தொன்னெடுங் கருவூர் என்னும் கடர்மணி வீதிமுதூர்”

Speaking of king Pukazh Cholan an earlier ancestor of his master, Anapaya Cholan Sekkilar says again that this "Peerless city of Karuvur was the proud possession of the kings of the Chola dynasty."

“அங்கணினி துறையுநாள் அரசிறைஞ்ச வீற்றிருந்து
கொங்கரொடு குடபுலத்துக் கோமன்னர் திறைகொணரத்
தங்கன்குல மரபின்முதற் றனிநகராங் கருவூரில்
மங்கலநா ளரசரிமைச் சுற்றமுடன் வந்தணைந்தார்.”

(Pukazh Chola Nayanar Puranam, Stz. 11).

What is worse for the Pandits and their school of scholars is that the very anonymous Karur-Thala-Puranam which they so much rely on in proof of their fond theory that this Karur was the old Chera capital Vanchi gives their case away in this connection. In reciting the story of Eripathar this Thalapuram speaks of Karur in terms so identical with the words of Sekkilar in his canto about the same Saiva Saint in his Periapuranam as it looks probable that the former simply confirms if not repeats Sekkilar's sentiments regarding the immemorial hereditary Chola connection with this town.

“முடிகு டரச ருணங்குட ணி முன்றிலுடையா ருலவியசீர்
குடுகுழ்கொங்கர் குடபுலத்தோர் கொணருந்திறை
கண்டிடல் வேண்டி
படிகு முனிகம் அமைச்சர் பரிசன மொய்கொளத் தம்பழி
பதியாம்
கடிகுழ்வாவிக் கருவூரனை அணைந்தார் முரசங்கலந்
தார்ப்ப”

(Karuvur Puranam, Eripatta Sarukkam Stz. 5)

It is thus clear that all Tamil poets from Sekkilar to the author of Karur puranam now for over a thousand years have uniformly held that this Karur always was

only a Chola town in the Cholanad and belonged hereditarily only to the Chola kings. If this Karur was a Chera capital before, and came to the Cholas by conquest as is suggested by the Pandits, nothing would be more natural and tempting to the poets than to recite or refer to such an achievement redounding to the glory of their Chola heroes especially when they had to make mention of this place in their panegyrics of Chola kings. It is unthinkable and most strange that all of them should ignore this glorious exploit of the Cholas and complacently speak of it purely as an ancient hereditary possession of the Chola House. All the inscriptions in and around Karur invariably and uniformly speak of Karur only as a Chola town. The ascertained history of the times also negates the naive suggestion of the Pandits in this connection. The Pandits insinuate that the Cheras were the original owners of this Karur upto the 5th century A. D. and lost it to the Cholas only when the latter became more powerful and aggressive and drove the former beyond the Ghats, between the 3rd and 10th century A. D. (*Vide* Chap. 10 and 13 of the 1st edition, 12 and 13 of the 2nd edition of Cheran Chenguttuvan). All the established facts and proved inscriptions on the other hand only prove that the Cholas were weak and insignificant and were repeatedly and frequently defeated and dwarfed by the Cheras and Pandyas during this very period, and that the Cholas rose to importance only from the time of Raja Rajan in the latter half of the 10th century A.D. Chilappadikaram and Pathiruppattu relate numerous conquests and victories of the Chera kings over the Cholas. King Chenguttuvan crushed all the nine princes and rulers of the Chola dynasty and gave the attenuated remnant of the Chola

territory to his nephew and nominee Killivalavan.

“சோழர் குடிக்குரியோர் ஒன்பதின்மர் வீழ”

(Pathikam to 5th canto of Pathirruppattu)

“நின்மைத் துனவளவன் கிள்ளியொடு பொருந்தா

ஒத்த பண்பினர் ஒன்பது மன்னர்

இளவரசு பொருஅர் ஏவல் கேளார்

வளநா டழிக்கு மாண்பின ராதலின்

ஒன்பது குடையு மொருபக லழித்தவன்.”

[Chilappadikaram Neerpadaikathai II. 118-122]

Again Chenguttuvan's successor Peruncheral Irumporai of Thagadur fame also vanquished the Chola and the allied Pandya kings and won many a victory that reduced the Cholas to great straits and utter humiliation. His exploits are sung by poet Arisilkizhar in unequivocal terms:

“கானிரி மண்டிய சேய்விரி வனப்பில்

புகார்ச் செல்வ! பூழியர் மெய்ம்மறை!”

[Pathirruppattu Stz. 73.]

His heir and successor Ilamcheral Irumporai also routed the Chola king of his times with all his allies and gave the conquered Chola regions to fire and sword.

“இருபெருவேந்தரும் விச்சியும் வீழ

அருமினை கல்லகத் தைந்தெயி லெறிந்து

பொத்தி யாண்ட பெருஞ்சோ முனையும்

வித்தை யாண்ட இளம்பழையன் மாறனையும்

வைத்த வெஞ்சினம் வாய்ப்ப வென்று

வஞ்சி மூதூர்த் தந்துபிறர்க் குதவி”

[Pathirruppattu Pathikam to Canto 9.]

From the 5th to the 9th century A. D. the Pallavas were rising in power and prestige. They gradually but effectively encroached upon and established their sway over large and extensive territories of the Cholas reducing

Cholanad to almost a petty principality and the Cholas to ignoble ease and contented oblivion. The classic city of Conjeevaram and all Chola regions down to Tanjore came under the Pallava flag. Saiva saints Thiru Navukkarasar and Gnana Sambandar in the 7th and Sundarar in the 8th century A.D. refer to the powerful Pallava rulers and their dominance over a wide area of what was Cholanad before. The Cholas often had even to pay tributes to the Pallavas. It is only from the time of Vijayalaya who founded the new Chola capital in Tanjore in the 9th century A.D. we hear of the revival of the political importance and the territorial expansion of the Chola kingdom. In the face of these incontrovertible facts it is impossible to contend that this Karur was the Vanchi of the Cheras of yore. When the whole territory in and around Karur known as Vengala nadu is proved to be part of the Cholanad from time immemorial, and when the whole of the Kongu region stretching to the west of this Vengala nadu up-to the Ghats—for nearly 300 miles is proved to have always remained a separate state not only independent of but often even hostile to the Cheras from times of yore, it is unthinkable that the Chera kings would have ever made this Karur situated in the regions of their rivals capital of their Malainad or Chera kingdom over 300 miles away in the west coast.

[2]

We shall now turn to the Tamil classics to see what they say about this ancient Chera city of Vanchi. Sekkilar in his Periapuranam says unequivocally that the modern Kodungolur in the west coast was Vanchi the ancient Chera capital.

“மாவீற் றிருந்த பெருஞ்சிறப்பின் மன்னுந்தொன்மை-
 மலைநாட்டுப்
 பாவீற் றிருந்த பல்புகழார் பயலுமியல்பிற் பழம்பதி
 தான்
 சேவீற் றிருந்தார் தீவுவஞ்சைக் களமும் நீலவீச்
 சேரர்குலக்
 கோவீற் றிருந்து முறைபுரியுங் குலக்கோ முதார்
 கொடுங்கோளுர்”

(Cheraman Perumal Puranam Stz. 1).

In this, the poet who was the great Prime Minister of King Anapaya Cholan, says that Kodungolur was the hereditary Royal seat of the Chera dynasty and that the old Vanchi murram formed a part of Kodungolur. Again in another verse Sekkilar speaks of this very place as the inner city of Vanchi,

“பொன்னூர் மௌலிச் சேரலனூர்.....

.....

.....

அந்நாட் டுள்ளார் அடைய திரந்தனைந்தார் வஞ்சி
 அகநகர்வாய்”

When Saint Sundarar came from his native place of Tiruvarur in the eastern Cholanad, crossing all the Konge country on his way on a visit to the Chera king Cheraman Perumal in his Malainad, the king goes out to receive him at the gate of his city of Kodungolur which Sekkilar calls again as Vanchi.

‘ உதியர் பெருமான் —.....

.....

.....

மதிதங்கிய மஞ்சணி இஞ்சி வஞ்சிமணி வாயிலை
 அணைந்தார்”

(Peria puranam, Vellanai Charukkam, Stz. 22)

This poet minister, Sekkilar composed his Periapuranam in the end of the 11th or the beginning of the 12th

century He distinctly mentions that the ancient Chera city of Vanchi is the modern Kodungolur in the west coast. Saint Sundarar who propagated Saivism in the 8th century A. D. has sung of this Kadungolur or Vanchaikkalam with its harbour Mahodai.

“கடலங்கரை மேல்மகோதை அணியார் பொழில் அஞ்-
சைக் களத்தப்பனே”

[Sundarar Thevaram Tiruvanchaikala pathikam].

In all his ten song Sundarar associates the Vanchaikalam with the harboured port of Mahothai. But by some metathetic solecism, the place is wrongly named in his songs as Anchaikkalam instead of Vanchaikkalam, as it should be. There can be no mistake however as to the identity of the place he sings about. No one dares or can suggest that there ever has been a place known as Anchaikkalam at all. Vanchimurram is the name of the old Chera capital familiar to all the classics. [Vide “வஞ்சி முற்றம் வயக்களஞ்சு” —[Puram, Stz. 373].

“வஞ்சி முற்றம் நீங்கிச் செல்வோன்”

“வளந்தலை மாங்கிய வஞ்சி முற்றம்”

(Chilappadikaram 25, Katchikathai II. 9 and 34).

The exact equivalent of Vanchimurram is ‘Vanchaikalam’. Shortening proper names, softening the final syllables with the vowel ‘ai’ is common in Tamil. Thanjai for Tanjavur, Uranthai for Uraiyur. Chennai for Chennapattanam. Muhavai for Muhavur. Thevai for Thevakottai, Nelvai for Nelveli are all too familiar to every Tamilian. Vanchi by this process easily became Vanchai and Kalam is a synonym of Murram. So Vanchaikkalam is only an exact equivalent of Vanchi murram. That this name Vanchaikkalam was in vogue for this place is proved

by references in literature. The following lines of Sekkilar quoted once before will bear out this fact.

“.....தொன்மை மலைநாட்டு

.....பழம் பதிதான்

சேவீற்றிருந்தார் திருவஞ்சைக்களமும்நிலவிச்சேரர் குலக்

..... கோமுதூர் கொடுங்கோளுர்.”

[Cheraman Perumal Puranam, Stz. 1].

The epithet ‘thiru’ is commonly added to all places of holy or sacred associations. All the two hundred and odd places sacred to the Saivites and the 108 holy shrines of the Vaishnavites have this adjunct ‘thiru’ prefixed to their names. So Vanchaikalam thus expanded into Thiruvanchaikalam, when the old Chera city of secular fame and associations in the classic age came to be reckoned as a holy Saivite place of pilgrimage. When again people in later times resolved this compound name into its constituent parts, it would be seen to consist of three elemental names Thiru [Holy] + Vanchai [Vanchi] + Kalam [Murram]. The middle Vanchai might easily be mistaken for Anchai. For, according to Tamil grammar V[வ] is uniformly requisitioned as a cementing consonant to avoid a hiatus and to fuse two vowels ending one and beginning the other of two words to be pronounced together. Thiru plus Anchai by this rule will be Thiruvanchai. The compound of Thiru plus Vanchai will also be Thiruvanchai according to rules of Tamil grammar. The latter may thus easily be mistaken for the former; and when this compound name is resolved again into its simpler components for purposes of prosody, and when the phonetic history of the compound is not remembered, there can be nothing easier than to mistake V at the beginning of the second

halt of the compound for a mere cementing consonant and read the second component as Anchaikalam instead of the correct form of Vanchaikalam. This is the only explanation for the name Anchaikalam for the old city of Vanchi in Sundarar's songs. In any event, there can be no other alternative theory, as there has been never a place near Kodungolur or Mahothai called Anchaikalam. And Sundarar expressly couples the port Mahothai with his Anchaikalam. Obviously Mahothai was the harboured port of Kodungolur and Anchaikalam was the name given to the site of the Siva Shrine in the inner town of Kodungolur. That this is the probable origin of this name for the interior or land-side town of Kodungolur is also clear from a similar reference to this place in the Kshetrakoval of Thirunavukkarasar's Thevaram. His actual words are these : “கொடுங்கோளுர் அஞ்சைக்களம்”. We see that Navukkarasar who lived in the 7th century A. D. also names the Saiva Shrine in Kodungolur as Anchaikalam. Thus it is clear that Anchaikalam must be the later metamorphosed form of the older Vanchimurram or Vanchaikalam. Vanch or Vanchimurram of the classic period known in later times as Vanchaikalam was identified with Kodungolur in the west coast by two out of the three Saiva Saints Thiru Navukkarasar in the 7th century and Sundarar in the 8th century A. D. in their respective Thevaram songs.

Sekkiliar also confirms this identity of the several stanzas of his Periapuranam in the end of the 11th or early in the 12th century A. D. I already adverted to the first stanza in Seraman Perumal Nayanar Puranam which runs as follows:

‘மாவீற் றிருந்த பெருஞ்சிறப்பின் மன்னும் தொன்மை
மலைநாட்டுப்

பாவீற்றிருந்த பல்புகழிற் பயிலுமியல்பிற் பழம்பதிதான்
சேவீற்றிருந்தார் தீருவஞ்சைக் களமு நிலவச் சேரர்
குலக்

கோவீற் றிருந்து முறைபுரியுங் குலக்கோ முதூர்
கொடுங் கோளுர்”

In this verse the erudite Chola Prime Minister unequivocally identifies the modern Kodungolur [known also as KodunKalur or Cranganore] with the old capital of the Chera dynasty known to the earlier classics as Vanchimurram or Thiruvanchaikalam. The words underlined in the above stanza literally say this, viz., “Tiruvanchaikalam, the capital city of yore of the ancient Malainad is Kodungolur the time-old royal seat of the house of the Chera kings.” This leaves us in no doubt whatever. For, in this, poet Sekkilar definitely mentions two facts. One is that the ancient Thiruvanchaikalam is Kodungolur. The second is that this kodungolur in the west coast is also the old Chera capital city of their ancient Malainad.

It is also interesting to note that to this day the people in and around Kodungolur proudly cherish the tradition that their place is the ancient Chera capital of Vanchi. Although the inland site of the Siva temple is called Anchaikalam, still there is no whisper anywhere in the neighbourhood or among the people of the place that their town itself ever bore the name of Anchaikalam.

In two or three other places and contexts in Periya puranam, Sekkilar reaffirms the identity of the old Vanchi with the modern Kodungolur with its harbour Mahodai. In speaking of the great journey of king Cheraman Perumal on a visit to famous Saivite shrines and to Saint Sundarar the king is said to have started from Thiruvanchaikalam or Kodungolur, traversed Kongunad and to

have finally reached the territories of the Cholas. [Vide Stzs. 46-50 of Cheraman Perumal Puranam]. Similarly on his return journey the king with Saint Sundarar is said to have recrossed the Kongu territory after visiting many sacred Siva temples in the Cholanad. Cheraman Perumal and Saint Sundarar are said to have worshipped the Siva temples in the Kongu region on their westward journey and reaching the Malainad the hereditary kingdom of the Cheras they arrived ultimately at the time-old Chera capital Vanchaikalam then known as Kodungolur [Vide] Stzs. 137-146 of Cheraman Perumal Nayanar Puranam]. The significant phrases 'கொடுங்கோளுரைணந்தார்' [reached Kodungolur)] in Stz. 143 and 'சென்று திருவஞ்சைக்களத்து நிகரில் தொண்டர்தமைக் கொண்டுபுகுந்தார் உதியர் நெடுந்தகையார்.' (The Chera king entered Thiruvanchaikalam with his peerless saintly friend) in Stz. 145 in the same context conclusively identify the old Vanchi with the modern Kodungolur. This same route from Tiruvarur in the Cholanad through the Kongu territory westward to the Chera capital Vanchi in the Malainad and the identity of the old Chera Vanch with the modern sea-coast town of Kodungolur in the west are again reiterated and reaffirmed in Vellanaï Charukkam of Periapuranam by the Poet-Minister Sekkilar. (Vide particularly Stzs. 3, 14, 15, 19, 22 of Vellanaï Charukkam),

Sekkilar of course lived and composed his Periapuranam in the end of the 11th or beginning of the 12th century A. D. But king Cheraman Perumal Nayanar and Saint Sundarar both lived in the 8th century A. D. Both upon archaeological evidences and literary references the research scholars like the late Government Epigraphist Mr. Gopinath Rao, late Professor Sundaram Pillai

and late Rāo Sahib Srinivasa Pillai of Tanjore have established that Sundarar and Cheraman Perumal lived and exchanged friendly visits in the 8th century A. D. King Cheraman Perumal ruled the old Chera kingdom of Malainad from the ancient Vanchi or Thiruvanchaikalam which was identified with Kodungolur in the Thevaram Songs of Thirunavukkarasar and Sundarar and the verses of Sekkilar in Periapuranam. What makes these references particularly significant and important is their insistence that this Kodungolur alias Vanchaikalam was the time old dynastic capital of the Royal House of the Chera Kings and not a newly acquired capital of the Cheras as suggested by the new school of Pandits.

3

Let us now turn to the older Tamil classics of the Sangam age and see if any and what guidance they may give us in this research. The author of Chilappadikaram was an ascetic prince and junior brother of the great warriorking Cheran Chenguttuvan. He personally listened to the story of Kannaki, the heroine of his epic poem Chilappadikaram as narrated by poet Sattanar who was a bard of the Tamil Sangam in the capital of the Pandyan king and who was an eyewitness of the incidents of Kannaki's life in so far as they happened in that capital city of Madurai. The author of Chilappadikaram describes the route taken by Kannaki when she left Madura after burning down that city in vindication of the innocence of her husband victimised by the blind rage of the Pandyan king. Kannaki is said to have entered the Royal Pandyan city with her husband by the main eastren gate of the city and to have sorrowfully effected

her exit alone in widow's weeds, after the murder of her husband, by the western gate of Madura and to have proceeded directly westward along the bank of the Vaigai river right up to the foot of the Western Ghats and to have ascended the Chengunru hills in the Chera's Malainad (*Vide* II. 182-200 of Katturaikathai No. 23, Chilappadikaram). Chilappadikaram further says that poet Sattanar in narrating this part of Kannaki's story to the king Chenguttuvan fancifully suggested that the widowed Kannaki did not wish to go in her longly state to the Cholanad from where she went to Madura with her husband, and reached the hill of Chengunru in the heart of the Chera kingdom in the west coast as if to report the tyranny of the Pandyan king to, and seek protection of, the Chera king. This is narrated in Katchikathai No. 25 of Chilappadikaram in lines 82-92. On hearing the poet Sattanar and the hillmen who were eyewitnesses to the last act of Kannaki climbing the Chengunru hill in the western Malainad Chenguttuvan's queen is said to have expressed her preference to build a temple to Kannaki as she last departed the world from their own kingdom.

“.....நம்அகல்நா டடைத்தனிப்

பத்தினிக் கடவுளைப் பரசல் வேண்டும்”

(II 113-4 of Katchikathai)

This also shows that this western Malainad where Kannaki last appeared alive was Chenguttuvan's kingdom. If Chenguttuvan ruled the territory round the modern Karur and if Malainad in the west was an independent principality ruled over by another branch of the Chera House, as suggested by Pandit M. Raghava Iyengar, Chenguttuvan's queen would not have claimed the western

Malainad as a kingdom of her husband as she is said to have done in these lines just quoted. All these narrations by the Chera prince-poet Ilango in his epic of Chilappadikaram make one fact clear beyond the possibility of doubt. Kannaki goes to the Chera kingdom in the west actually crossing the Western Ghats to Chengunru near Chenguttuvan's capital Vanchi. Chengunru is due west of Madura and is a hill west of the Ghats and not far away from the modern Kodungolur. (Chilappadikaram III edition 1927, p. 19). This situation of Chengunru is also admitted by Pandit Raghavayyengar in his prose-biography of Chenguttuvan. (First edition 1915 pp. 134—5),

The course of the river Vaigai which Kannaki followed runs due west of Madura to the Western Ghats and Chengunru is as the crow flies at least 100 miles due west from Madura and beyond the Ghats. If the modern Karur in the Trichinopoly District were the old Vanchi and capital of Chenguttuvan, Kannaki in her quest of Chenguttuvan's protection should proceed from Madura in a due northerly direction. For Karur is about 40 miles west of Trichinopoly and about 100 miles due north of Madura. Besides Karur is over 200 miles east of the Western Ghats. There can be no reason whatever for her to proceed westward along the banks of the river Vaigai to the Ghats to seek the Chera capital if it were near Trichinopoly. Nor the two poets Sattanar and Ilango both of them almost contemporaries of the eventful incidents in Kannaki's life could be expected to suggest that Kannaki's westward journey from Madura was in quest of the protection of the Chera king ruling in Karur

100 miles due north of Madura, and over 130 miles east of the Ghats. These narrations in Ilango's epic of Chilappadikaram in the name of the poet Sattanar therefore unmistakably conclude that Chenguttuvan's capital Vanchi could be nowhere near Karur in Trichinopoly District and was on the contrary to be sought somewhere due west of Madura along the course of Vaigai river and beyond the Western Ghats and near the Arabian Sea.

Again there is another reference in Chi'appadikaram that clinches this view of the topography of the old Chera capital Vanchi. A learned Brahman mendicant Parasaran by name and a resident citizen in the eastern kingdom of the Puhar Cholas went to the capital of the Cheras seeking the generous bounty of the contemporary munificent Chera king, Palyanai Chelkezhukuttuvan, the uncle of Chera Chenguttuvan and the hero of canto 3 in Pathirrupattu. The route he took from the eastern Chola kingdom to the Chera king's capital is described in Katturaikathai No. 23 of Chilappadikaram. Crossing the boundary of the Chola kingdom Parasaran is said to have traversed wide stretches of country and forest westward and to have actually crossed the Ghats or the Malaya Mountains, and putting the Western Ghats to his back to have proceeded further west to meet the Chera king in his capital. But after he received the Chera King's munificent bounty in his capital, he is said to have proceeded directly southward from the Chera city to see the Pandyan kingdom before reaching his own home in the Chola country. These facts are narrated in ll. 56-75 and 79 of Katturaikathai 23. The most pertinent part of this reference runs as follows :-

“பூம்புனற் பழனப்புகார் நகர்வேந்தன்
 தாங்கா விளையுள் நன்னா டதனுள்
 வலவைப் பார்ப்பான் பாசர னென்போன்
 குலவுவேற் சேரன் கொடைத்திறங் கேட்டு
 வண்தமிழ் மறையோற்கு வானுறை கொடுத்த
 திண்டிறல் நெடுவேற் சேரலற் காண்கென
 காடும் நாடும் ஊரும் போகி
 நீடுநீலை மலயம் பிற்படச் சென்றுங்கு

.....
 நாவலங் கொண்டு நண்ணு ரோட்டி

.....
 நன்கலங் கொண்டுதன் பதிப்பெயர்வோன்
 செங்கோல் தென்னவன் திருந்துதொழில் மறையவர்
 தங்கால் என்பது ஊரே அவ்வூர்

.....
 களைந்தனன் இருப்போன்”

(Chilappadikaram Kathai 23, ll 56—75 and 79)

Although the name Vanchi dose not appear in the lines under reference the context leaves no room for doubt as to the destination of Parasaran herein referred to. The poet definitely says that Parasaran went to the capital of the Chera king who was no other than the uncle of Chenguttuvan. Chenguttuvan's capital Vanchi is not mentioned in any of the ten verses or in the epilogue to canto 5 of Pathirrupptatu dedicated entirely to panegyryze the glory and triumph of king Chenguttuvan. Yet no one will dispute that Chenguttuvan's capital was Vanchi as that fact appears in the epic Chilappadikaram composed by Chenguttuvan's own brother. That the capital of his uncle and predecessor on the Chera throne could not be other than Vanchi is also clear from

the admission of the Pandits themselves that Imayavaramban, the elder brother of Palyanai Chelkezhututtuvan ruled the Chera kingdom, before the latter with Vanchi for his capital. (*Vide* page 11, 2nd edition of Chera Chenguttuvan by Pandit M. Raghava Iyengar). If his elder brother before him and his own nephew after him ruled the Chera country from Vanchi, it is only fair to hold that the same Vanchi was the capital of Palyanai-Chelkezhututtuvan who sat on the Chera throne between the reigns of the other two kings of his own dynasty, and this would almost be a certainty unless there is any indication in any of the verses relating to this Chera king to suggest that his capital was some place other than Vanchi. Far from such a suggestion the eulogiums of this king which form canto 3 in Pathiruppattu immediately after canto 2 in praise of his senior brother Imayavaramban and before cantos 1-6 in praise of his three nephews who wore the Chera crown after him would suggest that he succeeded his elder brother Imayavaramban and preceded his nephew Chenguttuvan on their admitted Chera throne in Vanchi. It is also admitted at page 14 in Chapter 2, of Chenguttuvan's prose biography by Pandit M. Raghava Iyengar that the ten cantos of Pathiruppattu have been arranged only in accordance with the order of succession of their hero-kings to the Chera throne. The epilogue to canto 3 simply says that this king was the junior brother of Imayavaramban the hero of the 2nd canto, and he is also said to have ruled over the Malainad as a Chera king. I have already cited the line

“நிலநா டெல்லை தன்மலை நாடெள்ள”

(Manimekalai, Kathai 26, 180)

in praise of Chenguttuvan in another connection. And this line definitely says that Malainad the kingdom of Palyanai Chelkezhut Kuttuvan was also the kingdom of Chera Chenguttuvan. Thus the references about king Palyanai Chelkezhut Kuttuvan the uncle and predecessor of Chenguttuvan on the Chera throne also point to Vanchi the capital of the Cheras being in Malainad which is admitted by the Pandits to be the country lying between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea. (*Vide* page 156 of his prose biography of Chenguttuvan, 2nd edition 1929).

There is yet another reference in Chilappadikaram which reinforces the truth that king Chenguttuvan's capital Vanchi was a city in his Malainad in the west coast. Speaking of Chenguttuvan's military expedition against the North Aryan kings in the Gangetic valleys his ascetic brother Ilango minutely describes in his epic poem of Chilappadikaram the ceremonious start of the king at the head of his army from his capital Vanchi as follows :

“.....வஞ்சிநீங்கி
தண்டத்தலைவருந்தலைத் தார்ச்சேனையும்
வெண்டலைப் புணரியின் விளிம்புக்கும் போத,
மலைமுதுகு நெளிய, நிலைநாடதர்பட,
உலக மன்னவன் ஒருங்குடன் சென்றுஆங்கு
ஆலும் புரவி அணித்தோர்த் தானையொடு
நீல கிரியின் நெடும்புறத் திறுத்தாங்கு”

(Chilappadikaram, Kalkotkathai 26, ll. 79-85)

Translated in simple English these lines would read as follows : “Leaving Vanchi the king with his generals

and the vanguard rounded the coast with the white foamed waves touching the edge of their wing; marched across the mountains, making the back of the Ghats writhe and hitch under the tramp of the troops; and passing by the plains as their route they reached the foot of the Nilgiris where they halted in encampment". This description of the route of Chenguttuvan and his expeditionary force from his capital Vanchi to the foot of the Nilgiri hills enroute to the Aryan region in the Gangetic valleys by his own brother is as lucid as it is positive. In the same contest a little further off the prince Ilango says that "breaking his camp at the foot of the Nilgiris the king marched northward to the Ganges and crossed the river by boat and engaged and routed the hostile Aryan forces in the trans-Ganges regions.

“பாடி மிருக்கை நீங்கிப் பெயர்ந்து
கங்கைப் பேரியாற்றுக் கன்னகிற் பெற்ற
வங்கப் பரப்பின் வடமருங் கெய்தி
.....
பகைப்புலம் புக்குப் பாசறை மிருந்த
தகைப்பருந் தாணை மறவோன்
.....
வடதிசை மருங்கின் மன்னவ ரெல்லாம்
.....
நிலந்திரைத் தாணையொடு நிகர்த்து மேல்வர
.....
காஞ்சித் தாணையொடு காவலன் மலைப்ப
.....
அடுத்தோர்த் தாணை ஆரிய அரசர்
கடும்படை மாக்களைக் கொன்றுகளங் குவித்து”

(Ibid II. 175-181, 184, 187, 191, 211-2)

If Chenguttuvan's capital Vanchi were the modern town of Karur in Trichinopoly District the king and his army would have only proceeded due north from their city towards their destination in the Gangetic valleys. They have no reason whatever to travel due west to the Nilgiris which is about 150 miles from Karur. Much less would there be any occasion for them in this march to cross any mountains before reaching the foot of the Nilgiris or for their edging the waves of any foaming sea. There is neither any mountain to cross nor any sea to touch on any route between Karur in the east and the Nilgiris in the west. On the other hand if Chenguttuvan's Vanchi was the modern Kodungolur on the west coast this description of the Chilappadikaram is admirably accurate of the only possible route for the military expeditionary force starting from Vanchi to go to the trans-Ganges Aryan territories. Any army auspiciously starting on any military expedition would leave the city only by the main gate. The opening line in this description just cited definitely mentions that Chenguttuvan and his army started from Vanchi. If that Vanchi were the modern Karur in Trichinopoly District there is no sea for any gate of its citadel to face in any direction round about the city. If it were Kodungolur then it is clear that this marine city on the west coast would naturally have its main gate facing west towards its harbour. And Chenguttuvan and his army emerging by this gate out of their ancient city would first touch the sea before turning round eastward to cross the Western Ghats, known as the Malaya mountains, by the Palghat Pass and taking the plains on the eastern slopes of the Ghats they would have marched northward. Nilgiris would then rightly come

on their way from the Palghat plains to the banks of the Ganges. This one reference in Chilappadikaram should suffice by itself to prove that Chenguttuvan's Vanchi could only be west of the Ghats and touching the sea in the western coast of Malainad. Prince Ilango's contemporary poet Sattanar has composed another epic named Manimekalai. It recounts the life of Manimekalai the beautiful and virtuous daughter of Kannaki's husband Kovalan and of his paramour Madhavi. In that poem Manimekalai is said to have started from an island Manipallavam south-east of the then Chola capital and emporium, Puhar, at the mouth of the river Kaviri with a definite object of going to Vanchi.

“..... வஞ்சியுட் செல்வனென்று
அந்தரத் தெழுந்தனள் அணியிழை தானென”

(*Manimekalai Kathai* 25 ll, 238.9)

Sattanar then says that after leaving the island of Manipallavam Manimekalai took an aerial flight to her destination and on her way to Vanchi alighted on the Chengunru hills to worship at the shrine built and dedicated by Chenguttuvan to Kannaki her father's wedded wife, deified after her death.

“...அணியிறை அந்தரமாரு யெழுந்து
தணியாக் காதல் தாய்கண்ணகி யையும்
கொடைவேழு தாதை கோவலன் தன்னையும்
கடவு ளெழுதிய வடிவம் காணிய
வேட்கை துறப்பக் கோட்டம் புகுந்து
வணங்கி நின்று

(*Ibid, Vanchimanagar Pukka Kathai* 26, ll 1-6)

The poet Sattanar here expressly says in these two references just quoted from Manimekalai that the deliberate

destination of Manimekalai when she left the island of Manipallavam was only Vanchi. There is no room to infer that she had any other desire to go to Chengunru or to offer worship to her father's wife Kannaki in her new temple. These lines of Sattanar make it perfectly clear that Manimekalai alighted and offered worship to the images of Kannaki and her husband in the temple on the Chengunru hills only because the temple and the hills happened to be on her way to Vanchi. She did not go there to offer this worship, as her sole intention and motive for the aerial trip are said to be to go to Vanchi to meet her own mother Madhavi and her foster-mother Suthamathi who were said to have taken asylum and refuge in Vanchi after the subsidence of their city of Pukar. (*Vide* Manimekalai, Kathai 25 ll. 201—206 and 238—9) Karur in Trichinopoly District is over 130 miles east of the Western Ghats while Chengunru hills as about 30 miles west of the Ghats. Nothing would be more unnatural for Manimekalai to have not only deviated from her way to Vanchi if Vanchi were Karur as far west as the Ghats, but also to have aimlessly crossed the Western Ghats and proceeded to Chengunru hills west of the Ghats and nearer the sea. On the other hand if Vanchi was Kodungolur in the west coast, this route she is said to have followed in these references from Sattanar's Manimekalai would be just the proper way for Manimekalai to take from the southeastern island of Manipallavam to Chenguttuvan's Vanchi on the west coast. Anyone from Cholanad in the east would have to cross the Western Ghats to reach Kodungolur on the western sea; and the Chengunru hills between the Ghats and this old Chera capital would then be on the way.

What Sattanar says about Manimekalai's entry into Vanchi after leaving Chengunru is even more irreconcilable with the suggestion that Vanchi was anywhere east of the Western Ghats. The following are the references in Sattanar's epic bearing upon this last stage of Manimekalai's flight to Chenguttuvan's Vanchi:—

“இன்னதிவ் வியல்வெனத் தாயெடுத் துரைத்தலும்,
 இனையோள் வனையோள் என்றுனக்கு யாவரும்
 விளைபொரு ளுரையார் வேற்றருக் கொள்கென,
 மையறு சிறப்பிற் றெய்வதந் தந்த
 மந்திர மோதியோர் மாதவன் வடிவாய்
 தேவ குலமும் தெற்றியும் பள்ளியும்
 பூமலர்ப் பொழிலும் பொய்கையும் மிடைந்து
 நற்றவ முனிவரும் கற்றடங் கினரும்
 நன்னெறி காணிய தொன்னூற் புலவரும்
 எங்கணும் விளங்கிய எயிர்புற இருக்கையில்,—
 செங்குட் டுவன்னனும் செங்கோல் வேந்தன்
 பூத்த வஞ்சி பூவா வஞ்சியில்
 பொற்கொடிப் பெயர்ப்பாடும் பொன்னகர்ப்
 பொலிந்தனன்”

(*Ibid Kathai 26. ll. 67-73 and 92*)

The substance of these lines in short is this : Apötheosized Kannaki in response to Manimekalai's invocation appeared to her and after narrating all that happened to herself and her husband Kovalan, Manimekalai's own father, in Madura offered her advice as to what she should do for her own future salvation. In accordance with this advice Manimekalai disguising herself as a male anchorite with the help of some mystic mantram left Chengunru hills and reached the shady and sheltered and well-watered outskirts of the citadel

or fort walls of the city of Vanchi nestling with monasteries, places of worship and sequestered asylums of people doing penances. Ascetics and anchorites are always said to avoid great cities and to seek shelter only in the secluded suburbs in the outskirts. Kannaki with her husband on reaching Madura sought refuge only in the quiet outskirts of the fortified Pandyan capital, and that part of the town has been described in almost identical terms and as being also the favourite resort of ascetics and anchorites in Chilappadikaram.

“புள்ளணி கழனியும் பொழிலும் பொருந்தி
வெள்ளநீர்ப் பண்ணையும் விரிநீ ரேரியும்
வாய்க்குலைத் தெங்கும் வாழையம் கமுகும்
வேய்த்திரட் பந்தரும் விளங்கிய இருக்கை,
அறம்புரி மாந்தர் அன்றிச் சேராப்
புறஞ்சிறை மூதூர் புக்கனர் புரிந்தென்”

(*Katkai 13. II. 191-6*)

The words referring to the outskirts of Madura in the Chilappadikaram lines just quoted are Puram-chirai-moodoor (புறஞ்சிறை மூதூர்) Puram means outside, chirai means fort and moodoor means old town. The phrase therefore means outskirts of the fortified old town, and that part of the city of Madura is said to be the favoured resort of “arampuri manthar” (அறம்புரி மாந்தர்) those engaged in penances. Similar words employed in referring to the outskirts of Vanchi in the lines quoted above are “yeyil-pura-irukkai” (யெயிற்புற விருக்கை). Yeyil means a fort; puram of course means outside, irukkai means place. The phrase thus means the place outside the fort. Here again the poet tells us that these outskirts of Vanchi are also full of shaded

groves and freshwater-ponds and form the asylum of munivars (ascetics) and quiet sadhus (anchorites). We have another significant reference to this sequestered and sheltered resorts of anchorites, monks and mendicants in the outskirts of Vanchi in the opening lines of the prologue to Chilappadikaram.

“குணவாயிற் கோட்டத்து அரசு துறந்திருந்த
குடக்கோச் சேரல் இளங்கோ வடிகட்கு”

Literally these lines when translated would read as follows: “To the ascetic junior Chera prince who was residing in a monastic Chapel in the proximity of the east gate of Vanchi”. Reading these lines of Chilappadikaram with those of Sattanar in Manimekalai referring to the outskirts of Vanchi first reached by Manimekalai after leaving Chengunru hills, we receive further light as to the identity of the place. The first halt of Manimekalai after leaving Chengunru must be thus the outskirts near the east gate of the fortified Vanchi town. In this east gate suburb Manimekalai is said to have held debates with the leaders of different schools of thought and theologians.

From this suburb ‘Kunavayil Purakudi’ outside the east gate, Sathanar tells us in Kathai No. 28 of his Epic ‘Manimekalai’, that his heroine entered the walled residential city in the heart or the centre of Vanchi; which he significantly describes as (இடைநிலைவரைப்பு) Idainilaivaraippu. Idai+ilai+varaippu means the middle or central part or premises. And finally she makes her exit through the western main gate of Vanchi to fly north to Kanchipuram—her original destination. If Karur near Trichinopoly were Vanchi, then Manimekalai

would not have to cross the Ghats at all; and would ordinarily enter that city on her way north to Kanchi only by the south gate and emerge out by the north gate. On no account should Manimekalai seek the western gate for exit to proceed to Kanchi lying east by north from Karur. It is only Kodungolur in the west coast would have its main gate in the west facing the harbour and the sea front; and Manimekalai from the Chengundru hills would, to reach this citadel, have to approach it from the east, and after seeing round the place, would emerge through the western main harbour or sea-ward gate. This detailed description of Vanchi in Manimekalai therefore would not square with Karur in the Cholanad, but fits in only with the maritime or sea fronted Kodungolur in the west coast.

(4)

Those who hold that Karur in Trichinopoly District was the ancient Chera capital city of Vanchi rely on what they believe to be two coincidences

(1) Karur in Trichinopoly District is also called 'Vanchularanyam' or 'Vanchuladavi' in the Karur-Thalapuranam.

“வஞ்சுளாரணியம் வஞ்சிகருஞூர்.. ..”

(Cheran Chenguttuvan, 2nd edition p. 162)

“ஒது தொல்பதி யவற்றின் உதியர்கோளுட்டின்
மீது யர்ந்த ஆம்பிராவதி நதிக்கரைக் மிசையில்
தாது போதவிழ் வஞ்சுளாடவி எனச்சாற்றும்
ஆதி யாபுரச் சிறப்பினை அளந்துரைத் தனனால்”

(Karur Thalapuranam — Section Varahacharukam

St: 18)

(2) Vanchi was also known as Karuvur. For this they quote the following lines of poet Nakkirar in Stz. No. 93 in Ahananuru.

“.....கோதை
திருமா வியனகர்க் கருவூர் முன்றுறைத்
தெண்ணீர் உயர்கரை குவையிய
தண்ணுன் பொருதை மணலினும் பலவே”

They argue that Vanchi must be a contraction of Vanchuladavi, and Karur is abbreviation of Karuvur and the conclusion is drawn that Karur in Trichinopoly District must therefore be the ancient Chera capital of Vanchi. But there are obvious fallacies in these contentions; and facts and references from literature negative the conclusions. And let us see what Tamil literature has to say about these contentions.

In the first place Karurthalapuram which is the only authority for Karur's names Vanchuladavi or Vanchularanyam is a recent anonymous fiction, and it was composed even according to Pandit M. Raghava Iyengar not more than 300 years ago. Thalapurams are new compositions full of fabled inventions and concocted myths deliberately woven to give prestige and create antiquity for places to gratify the ambition of the residents therein. They are utterly unreliable for any historical investigations. Vanchularanyam and Vanchuladavi are both Sanskrit compounds meaning a forest or grove of Asok¹ trees; Vanchulam = Asoku; adavi or aranyam = a forest. Pandit Raghava Iyengar also says in page 162 of his prose biography of Cheran Chenguttuvan (2nd edn.) that Karur got this name only because there were Asoku groves all around the place. Now

these Sanskrit causal names for Karur were not known to any literature or inscriptions relating to Karur prior to this new anonymous Karurthalapuram. Pandit Raghava Iyengar himself sorrowfully admits that all inscriptions in and about Karur only refer to it as a Chola possession and with exclusive Chola associations. (*Vide* pp. 130-1 of Chera Chenguttuvan 1st edn. 1915). In fact all the old inscriptions in Karur of five Chola kings dating from the 9th century A. D. mention that Karur was ever a Chola city. (*Vide* South Indian Inscriptions Vol. III Nos. 20 to 26). Periapuranam was composed early in the 12th century A. D. by Sekkilar the great prime minister of the famous and flourishing Chola kingdom. In his great masterpiece held in high esteem in the world of scholars both for its literary merit and historic accuracy, this Karur or Karuvur in Trichinopoly District is mentioned in more places than one: and always and in every context, it is expressly described as the hereditary and cherished Chola possession and not adverted to as ever having been a Chera city acquired or annexed by the Chola kings by conquest. *Vide* :—

“தங்கள் குலமரபின் முதற்றனி நகரங் கருவூரில்”

(*Periapuranam, Pukazh-Chola nayanar puranam*
Stz. 11)

Again

“மன்னிய அநபாயன்சீர் மரபின்மா நகரமாகும்
தொன்னெடுங் கருவூரென்னும் சுடர்மணி வீதிமுதூர்”
(*Ibid Yeripathar Stz. 2*)

If as suggested by Pandit Raghava Iyengar Karur were the ancient Vanchi of the Chera kings and only

became a Chola city by the latter's military conquest in later times, Sekkilar—the Chola minister could not forget and would not fail to speak of this proud laurel of his patrons. Much less would he venture to mention deliberately that this Karuvur was always the proud hereditary Chola possession. Even the anonymous author of Karurthalapuram, relied on by Pandit Raghava Iyenger for his new thesis completely gives his case away by admitting in another context in that very Thalapuram that this Karur was the ancient seat of the monarchs of the royal Chola House.

“.....
குடிசூழ் கொங்கர் குடபுலத்தோர் கொணருந் திறைகண்
படிசூழ் முனிகம் அமைச்சர்பரி சனமொய் கொளத்தும்
பழம்பதியாம்
கடிதும் வாவிக் கருவூர் இணைந்தார்
முரசங் கலந்தார்ப்ப”

(*Karur Thalapuram, Yeripatta Charukkam Stz. 5*)

This is not all. There are yet more revealing references in Periapuranam. Far from claiming this Karur in the Cholanad to be the Chera capital of yore, the great Chola minister Sekkilar expressly identifies the ancient Vanchi with Kodungolur in the west coast. (*Vide*)

“சேவீற் றிருந்தார் திருவஞ்சைக் களமும் நிலவிச் சேரர்குலக்
கோவீற் றிருந்து முறைபுரியுங் குலக்கோ மூதூர்
கொடுங்கோளுர்”

(*Periapuranam—Cheraman Perumal puranam Stz. 1*)

Again in speaking of the rousing reception given by king Cheraman Perumal to Saint Sundarar in Kodungolur, Sekkilar says as follows :—

“உதியர் பெருமான் பெருஞ்சேனை ஒதம் கிளர்ந்தார்ப்ப

 மதிதங் கியமஞ் சணியிஞ்சி வஞ்சி மணிவா
 யிலையனைந்தார்”

(*Ibid—Vellanai Charuakkm Stz. 22*)

In both these contexts, Sekkilar not merely identifies Kodungolur as the Cheras' Vanchi, but emphasizes the important central fact that this Kodungolur always was the hereditary Chera capital and seat of power from times immemorial. Nothing can be clearer than these references in Periapuranam. For they lucidly and equally emphatically affirm in the respective contexts that Kodungolur in the west coast was always the ancient Vanchi of the Chera kings, and that Karur in the eastern Kaviri valley was ever the hereditary Chola possession. These statements have been made in the 12th century A.D. when the Chola monarchs were just recovering their prestige lost since Cheran Chenguttuvan's time and made by no less an authority than a great Chola minister of state.

I shall now mention some other references in the ancient classics which are even more damaging and fatal to the Pandit's thesis. I have already adverted to the fact that the names Vanchuladavi and Vanchularanyam for Karur were coined and used for the first time in the recent Karur Thalapuram by its ambitious but anonymous author. And the reason given for these names for Karur both by that anonymous author and by the Pandits is that Karur took that name from the groves of Asoku trees in and about that town. If these names were not known before they were advertised in the recent Karurthalapuram and could have no application before the Asoku groves were planted

there, and if all the Chola inscriptions of five Chola kings in Karur dating from the 9th century A. D. and the several verses of the Chola minister Sekkilar in his great work of Periapuranam composed in the 12th century A. D. speak of the place only by its proper name 'Karuvur' the Chera Vanchi of the early classics should be some place other than this Karur of course: and Sekkilar says it was Kodungolur in the west coast. Apart from this apriori reasoning and Sekkilar's assurances, the old Sangam classics themselves negative the new attempt to identify the ancient Chera Vanchi with the Chola city of Karur in a very conclusive manner.

Both the great old epics of Chilappadikaram and Manimekalai were composed by poets who were contemporaries of the Chera king Chenguttuvan. They both expressly and repeatedly reiterate the time-old tradition that the ancient Vanchi was so called not in reference to any Asoku or any other trees but by the Tamil name of a creeper, Vanchi whose flower was always the symbol of successful military expeditions 'Vanchulam' is the Sanskrit name for an Asoku Tree. The capital of the Cheras existed from time immemorial, long before Sanskrit itself was systematized. Its ancient name 'Vanchi' can have no reference whatever to this fancied recent Sanskrit derivations. The great ancient classic poets themselves definitely affirm that the old Chera city took its name not from any trees, but only from the Tamil name of the creeper 'Vanchi', (*Vide*).

(1) "பொற்கொடி வஞ்சியிற் பொருந்திய வண்ணமும்"

(*Manimekalai, Pathikam, l. 86*)

(2) “பொற்கொடிப் பெயர்ப்படுஉம்

திருந்திய நன்னகர்”

(*Ibid*, *Kathai* 28, ll. 101 and 102)

(3) “பொற்கொடிப் பெயர்ப்படுஉம் பொன்னகர்”

(*Ibid*. *Kathai* 26, l. 92)

(4) “பொற்கொடி மூதூர்ப் புரிசை வலங்கொண்டு”

(*Ibid*. *Kathai*, 28, l. 170)

The clear thesis of the Pandits and of the anonymous author of Karur Thalapuram is equally definite of course. According to them the real genesis of the name ‘Vanchi’ for Karur in Trichinopoly District is to be found in the Sanskrit name “Vanchulam” for the Asoku trees found in and around Karur. The Tamil classics of the 2nd century A. D. emphatically declare that the ancient Chera capital owes its name ‘Vanchi’ solely to the creeper of that name associated with the city. The creeper’s Tamil name Vanchi differs as distinctly from the Sanskrit name ‘Vanchulam’ for Asoku trees as cheese does from chalk. To suggest that an ancient Tamil name must be attributed to a fanciful later Sanskrit derivation is in itself unwarranted and it would be the height of presumption to assume that the Sanskrit name of a gigantic tree is the same as the pure old Tamil name for a creeper adopted as a symbol for military valour, and for victorious expeditions in Tamil books like Tholkappiam proved to be over 2,500 years old, and then to argue that the ancient Chera Capital Vanchi associated always from time immemorial with this creeper must be identified with a later town of the rival Chola kings in the eastern plains whose Tamil name has always been

only Karuvur, but to which some recent anonymous author fancifully suggested a more sounding Sanskrit name in reference to a grove of trees imaginarily associated with that Chola town.

(2) Their second line of approach to identify the later eastern Chola town of Karuvur with the ancient west Coast Chera capital Vanchi is in the resemblance of the name Karuvur. The Chola town is always called as Karur or more properly 'Karuvur'. The Chera capital was always known as 'Vanchi'; but there are some contexts in the classics which refer to the fort or walled residential quarters of Vanchi as Karuvur. One such is the quotation from Nakkirar's stanza in Ahananuru already cited:

“.....கோதை
திருமாவிய நகர்க்கருவூர் முன்றுறை.”

I shall presently show that this line of Nakkirar itself disproves the suggested identity of the Chera capital with the Chola town of Karur. Meantime, I should take leave to show how fallacious it is to identify or confuse different places merely by the similarity of their names. Even if there were two places alone with this same or similar name, it would be wrong to make their common name a basis for any inference as to their identity. But there are as many as four places at least with the name of Karuvur. Sekkilar's positive references in his Periapuranam both to the Chola town of Karuvur in Trichinopoly District, and to the Chera city of Kodungolur at the mouth of the Periyar in the west coast occasionally called Karuvur have been mentioned already in this thesis above.

There is a Karur on the Periyar but far inland nearer the hills, visited by late Mr. Kanakasabai Pillai and fancied by him to be the ancient 'Vanchi'. There is yet another Karuvur in the Mizhalai Kurram or district in the Eastern Chola country mentioned in the Chola inscriptions in Kumbakonam Temple Walls also. These four places have the name Karuvur in common between them. But who would imagine that because of their common names they all should or any two of them must be one and the same place.

There are two places named Thondi, one in the Chera Malainadū in the west coast, and the other in the east coast of the Pandiyan-country. So also are two Musiris, and two Tanjais or Tanjores in two different kingdoms. No one would ever think of identifying these places by reason of the sameness or similarity of their names. As against the mere name, I have referred to positive pronouncements in authoritative old Tamil Works like Sekkilar's Periyapuranam and in the Chola inscriptions of the 10th century A. D. (Ins. 20 to 26—Vol. III of the Government publications of the South-Indian Inscriptions), which definitely identify the old Chera Vanchi with Kodungolur in the west coast, and declaring Karur in Trichinopoly District to be ever an exclusive Chola possession from yore. This should suffice to negative the new thesis, or suggestion based on a mere similarity of names.

I shall now advert to some constructive indications in the old Tamil classics, which give us cogent and satisfactory proofs for identifying the old Vanchi with Kodungolur in the west coast. Karuvur is not familiar to or commonly met with in the old Tamil classics as

a name for Vanchi. One can easily come across over a hundred contexts in the many early classic poems, all referring to the Chera capital city only by the familiar name of Vanchi. Not a single textual reference to the name Karuvur for Vanchi other than the one line of Nakkirar just quoted is yet found or cited. If Karuvur is the old name for Vanchi, one should hear of it more than once in the innumerable references to this classic city in the several classic poems of many an ancient author of this augustan period of Tamil Literature. The total absence of any reference to this name Karuvur for Vanchi in the numerous contexts in the two great epics of Manimekalai and Silappadikaram, and all the old poems of Pathiruppattu of ten different authors, which are all devoted to eulogise the Chera king's and their city is conspicuously significant. The Truth of the matter is that Vanchi is the only real name for the ancient Chera Metropolis. But the fort or walled landward royal residence as apart from the sea-side harbour was known as Vanchi murrām or Karuvur; and the harboured seaward portion was called 'Musiri' in the prehistoric period, and 'Mahodhai' in the medieval times. I have already explained the significance of the names Vanchi murrām and Vanchaikalam. Murrāms and Kalams are only synonyms which generally indicate a court or level terrain. In scores of contexts, the old classics refer to this Chera capital only by the familiar name of Vanchi; but references are not wanting to the name Vanchi-Murrām. *Vide*.

1. “வஞ்சி முற்றம் வயக்கள னாக”

2. “வஞ்சி முற்றம் நீங்கிச் செல்வோன்”

(Line 9 of Katchi Chilappa)

3. “வளந்தலை மயங்கிய வஞ்சி முற்றத்து

(Ibid, L.34)

The places where this name Vanchi murram appears in the classics, reveal to scrutiny the significant fact that in all of them the reference is not to the city in general, but only to the fortified royal residence. Where merely the city as such is intended without any special reference to the inland walled town, the ordinary name of Vanchi is employed; but whenever, the fort or the walled terraine of the city was meant, the more appropriate name Vanchimurram is used, which indicates that the poet there intended to refer not veguely to the old city, but to the Murram or the terraine of Vanchi. Similarly where only the harbour alone is intended, the name musiri and not Vanchi is used. This explains the references in the Periplus to ‘Musiris’ or ‘Muchiris’ as the Port, and to ‘Karuvur’ as the inland royal citadel. This is also why the classics, which commonly speak of Vanchi as the city of the Cheras, refer to the royal residence therein as Vanchi-murram or Vanchiaganagar.

‘வஞ்சி முற்றம் நீங்கிச்செல்வோன்’.

(line 7 Katchikathai-Chilppathikaram)

meaning “As king Chenguttuvan emerged out of Vanchi-murram.” Again, Sekkilar refers to the royal residence of Cheraman Perumal as Vanchiaganagar, which means literally the inner parts or premises of the city of Vanchi.

Thus it is clear from times of yore that the ancient Chera-capital city 'Vanchi' included in its ambit or range both the harbour 'Musiri' and the fortified terraine Vanchimurram. In the times of the Saiva Saints and poets i.e., from 7th Century A.D., the harbour 'Musiri' came to be known as 'mahothai', and the terraine Vanchimurram' was called 'Vanchaikalam' or Kodungolur. Saint Appar's Thevaram composed in the 8th century A.D., and Periapuranam lines already cited prove this beyond any doubt.

“கடலங் கரைமேன் மகோதை

அணியார் பொழி லஞ்சைக் களத்தப்பனே”

(Sundarar-Thevaram, Thiruvanjaikala pathikam).

The very first stanza of Cheraman-perumal nayanar Puranam quoted before in this thesis definitely names the Chera capital as Vanchaikalam or Kodungolur.

“சேவீர் றிருந்தார் திருவஞ்சைக் களமும் நிலவிச்

சேரர்குலக்

கோவீர் றிருந்து முறைபுரியுங் குலக்கோ மூதூர்

கொடுங்கோனார்.”

The piers, the wharves and godowns were all in the harbour known as Musiri alias Mahodhai. The royal palace, the Siva temple and the dwelling houses were all in the central walled terraine west of the harbour, and known as Vanchimurram or Karuvur in the classic age and as Vanchaikalam or Kodungolur in later times. And further east of this fortified city lay the suburb known as 'Kunavayil' or eastern-gate. To this day this topography of this ancient city stands without any material alteration. There is still the harbour at the mouth of the river

Periyar, now known as *Alwaye*. Above that is the town Kodungolur; and a little to the east lies the hamlet still called Kunavayil. In the age of the Tamil classics the central fortified city lay between the harbour in the west and the suburb in the east. The eastern suburb is called Purakkudi (புறக்குடி) or outlying hamlet (in the epic of Manimekalai) just as the outskirts of the Pandiyan Capital Madura was called Purancheri (புறஞ்சேரி). Both the names Purakkudi and Purancheri mean one and the same thing in Tamil:— (Puram = outside; and Cheri or Kudi a suburban hamlet). In Manimekalai the central walled city was named as Idainilaivarappu (இடைநிலை-வரப்பு) which in Tamil means the middle or central terrain. Vanchi is a general name of the whole city comprising all these three parts viz., the harbour in the west, the fort in the centre and the outlying suburb in the east while each of these three parts had its own separate name. The harbour's name was Musiri, the walled city was known as 'Vanchimurram' or 'Vanchaikalam' and the suburb outside the eastgate was known as kunavayil or Eastgate.

In ancient times great coastal cities appear to have been all planned on similar lines as, this Vanchi was The great Chola metropolis 'Kavirippattinam' also known as "Puhar" was a great emporium at the mouth of the river Kaviri, driving a flourishing seaborne trade until it was submerged. That city comprised an eastern harbour known as 'Pattina-Pakkam', and the western inner city called 'Maruvur-Pakkam' with a long connecting avenue between them. This is the description of the maritime Chola city of "Puhar" in Kathai 5 of the epic, Chilappadikaram. The only topographical difference

between these two maritime cities was that while Vanchi opened into her harbour in the west, Puhar faced eastward to her seafront. This was due solely to the difference in their geographical situations the Chera-capital lying on the Arabian sea, while the Chera city lay on the Bay of Bengal. In all other details the description of Puhar in Chilappadikaram Kathai 5 is almost identical with that of Vanchi in Manimekalai Kathais 28 and 29. Vanchimurram, the walled Chera city was called Karuvur in common parlance as distinct from the harbour Mahothai, just as the city proper of Puhar was called Maruvur as apart from her harbour known as Pattinappakkam. 'Karu' in Tamil means strong or great; Karuvur therefore signifies the strong citadel or the great fortified city. The walled portion of Vanchi was generally known as Vanchi-murram or Vanchaikalam; and the name Karuvur for it was almost unknown to the Tamil classics except for the solitary reference in Nakkirar's stanza in Agananuru already adverted to earlier in this enquiry.

That even Nakkirar's line refers only to the central city a part from the harbour or the beach, and not to the whole capital of the Cheras is clear from the very description of Nakkirar in this poem.

The relevant lines of this poem relied on by the Pandits to prove by the name Karuvur occurring therein that the Chera Capital was Karuvur near Trichinopoly run as follows :—

“ கோதை
 திருமா வியனகரீக் கருவூர் முன்றுறைத்

தெண்ணீ ருயர்கரைக் குவைஇய
தண்ணான் பொருளை மணலினும் பலவே”

‘May Kothai’s (the Chera king’s) life be as countless as the grains of sand heaps barking the river Porunai where it forms the harbour in front of the great city of Karuvur’. Poet Nakkirar here speaks of the sand banks at the harbour mouth of the Porunai or Periyar in front of the walled city known in common parlance as Karuvur. The sands in the *munthurai* (முன்றுறை) of Karuvur, and not Karuvur itself form his theme. Munthurai means harbour in front (mun=in front, thurai=harbour). This harbour portion at the mouth of the river Porunai or Periyar is *musiri* known in later times as “Mahothai”

The poet here refers to the royal residence in the citadel or Karuvur appropriately as the city of Kothai, the dynastic title or surname of the Chera king, and wishes the Chera king as many days more to live as there were grains in the sand heaps in the river mouth in his city’s harbour-front. Far from supporting the theory of the Pandits, these lines of Nakkirar negative their contention in as much as the city is said to stand on and face the mouth of the river Porunai *i.e.*, Karuvur = munthurai.

It is interesting in this connection to compare the following lines of poet Kundukatpalaiyathar in a similar context:—

.....வஞ்சிப் புறம்தில்லைக்கும்...-தண்ணான் பொருளை
மணலினும் பலவே.” (Puram. 387)

These lines when translated would read thus:—
‘May the Chera king have as numerous days of life as

there were grains of sand in the river Porunai whose waters lave and lash the outer walls of Vanchi". These two references conclusively prove that the city of Vanchi known also as Karuvur stands at the mouth of the river Porunai, and so close to its stream that its water breaks on the city's walls. Karur near Trichy is neither a marine nor even a riverine town.

The stream with its modern name of Amravathi is very many miles away from this inland Karur; and there is no evidence to connect it with the river Pounai or Periyar, which is ever closely associated with Vanchi in all the references from the old classics. Pandit M. Ragavayyengar ingeniously suggests that the river Amravathi, which once must have flowed by Karur, might have since shifted its course to over seven miles off that city. But all the other references to this inland Chola's Karur in the Thevarams of the 7th and 8th centuries, and in Periapuranam of the 12th century A. D. speak of it only as a town sans river, while all the references from the Tamil Literature uniformly and invariably refer to Vanchi or Karuvur, of the Cheras as a city on the 'Porunai'. 'Porunai' or Aan-Porunai, 'Periyar' or 'Perar', 'Kanchi', 'Chulli' 'Vanyar', are only several names of the great river in the Chera's Malainadu. This river takes its rise in the Western Ghats; but unlike all the great rivers in South India which flow eastward to the Bay of Bengal, the Chera River Periyar making its course westward empties itself into the Arabian Sea. All the ancient poets in their old classics speak of Vanchi as standing on the river Periyar or Porunai in such proximity as its waters have the city's outer walls (*Vide*. Verses of Ilaveyini, Puram

11) and of Kundukattu Paliyathan (Puram 387), of Alathur Kilar (Puram 36), of Nakkirar (Agam 93) and of Ilango in his epic of Chilappathikaram. River Periyar was also called 'Aan Porunai', to distinguish it from another river Porunai in the Pandiyan kingdom. Periyar or Perar means the great river; and this Periyar is expressly described by poet Parananar, in his Stanza 48 in the Vth canto of Pathiruppattu as rising in Chenguttuvan's own hills Ayirais a range in the Ghats, and as falling into his own Western Sea.

“நின்மலைப் பிறந்து நின்கடல் மண்டும்”

Musiri or Mahodai (now Alwaye) the port or harbour of Vanchi still stands at the mouth of Periyar. Karuvur near Trichinopoly neither now stands on, nor has ever been associated with any river in any of the old Tamil classics. All the Thevaram stanzas composed in the 7th and 8th centuries A. D. (known as Karuvur Anilai Pathikam) speak of this Karur as a riverless inland place. Sekkilar in his Periyapuranam composed in the 12th century refers to this Karuvur in several contexts, and yet never once speaks of it as being on or near by to any river. For, Karuvur really is not near any river at all. Amravathy is a petty tributary to the Kaviri and runs several furlongs away from Karuvur. This stream is dry for ten months in the year, and takes its rise in the Varahamalai on the east slope of the Ghats, whereas the river Periyar or Porunai, which is uniformly spoken of as washing the walls of Vanchi, is, as its very name Periyar indicates, a great perennial river navigable to ships and sails from times of yore. Again, Periyar takes its rise from Ayiraimalai in the ghats, and empties into the western sea.

And the river Periyar is expressly associated with all the great Chera kings eulogised by the several poets in the ten cantos of Pathirrupattu (*Vide* Stanzas Nos. 13—14—28, 43, 48, 86, 87, 88 of Pathirrupattu).

In the face of all these facts there can be no warrant to identify this great Chera river Porunai with the petty tributary streams in the Cholanad, now known as Amravathy. Again, the names Amravathy and Suthanathi for this petty stream are derived from the mango groves through which it is fancifully described to flow. But the river Aan-Porunai owes its name to the fact that it swells in floods in the month of Ani (June—July) with the outbreak of the South West Monsoon, and has nothing whatever to do with Aan or cow whose fabled worship at a temple is said to have given the name “Aanilai” to this Karur according to its recent anonymous Thalapuranam. Thus from every point of view it is abundantly clear that the ancient Vanchi is not Karur near Trichinopoly, but is some town in the Malainad west of the Ghats, and standing on the great river Porunai or Periyar flowing into the Arabian Sea.

(5)

Karur near Trichinopoly is an inland town; it is over 350 miles east of the Arabian sea, and about 150 miles west of the Bay of Bengal. If this Karur were the old Vanchi, there can be no reference in literature at any time associating Vanchi with any beach or sea-front. But we find in fact many a passage in the Tamil Literature of all ages positively indicating that the ancient Chera city of Vanchi was a sea port.

(i) . We have already seen how definitely the great Chola minister-poet Sekkilar in the 11th or the 12th century A D. mentioned that Vanchi and Tiruvanchaikalam were the names of Kodungolur on the west coast. In stanza one in Cheraman Perumal Nayanarpuranam he definitely says that (1) the hereditary royal residence of the Chera kings and site of the Saivite shrine were known as Thiruvanchaikalam (2) that it formed the landward or inner part of the town known in his (Sekkilar's) time as Vanchi Aganagar or Kodungolur, and (3) that this was the ancient dynastic capital of the Chera kingdom of Malainad.

“மாவீற் றிருந்த பெருஞ்சிறப்பின் மன்னுந் தொன்மை
மலைநாட்டுப்

பாவீற் றிருந்த பல்புகழிற் பயிலு மியல்பிற் பழற்பதிகான்
சேவீற் றிருந்தார் திருவஞ்சைக் களமும்நிலவீச் சேரர்-
குலக்

கோவீற் றிருந்து முறைபுரியும் குலக்கோ முதூர் கொடுங்-
கோளுர்.”

(Stz. 1. Cheraman Perumal Nayanar Puranam.)

Sakkilar says in another context that king Cheraman Perumal had to touch the sea-waves on leaving his royal residence in the inner town of Vanchi before he set out to meet his friend, Saint Sundarar, in the eastern Cholanad.

(ii) We also adverted to the Thevara Padikam of Saint Sundarar of the 8th century A. D ; in which the last line of each of the ten verses definitely mentions that the town of Tiruvanchaikalam mistakenly pronounced as Tiru Anchaikkalam stood facing its harbour- Mahothai (old musiri), in the beach.

“கடலங் கரைமேல் மகோதை அணியார் பொழில்கூழ்
அஞ்சைக் களத்தப்பனே”

Vanchaikkalam, the inner town is here expressly said to be surrounded by the lovely groves of the harbour front Mahothai on the sea beach.

(iii) The Chera king Chenguttuvan's own brother, Ilango, in describing the pompous start of his royal brother and his forces on the north Indian expeditions in his famous epic Chilappadikaram says as follows:—

“.....வஞ்சி நீங்கித்
தண்டத் தலைவரும் தலைத்தாரச் சேனையும்
வெண்டலைப் புணரியின் வீளிம்புதழ் போத,
மலைமுதுகு நெளிய, நிலைநாட தர்பட,
உலக மன்னவன் ஒருங்குடன் சென்றருங்கு
ஆலும் புரவி அணித்தேர்த்தாணையொடு
நில கிரியின் நெடும்புறத் திறுத்தாங்கு”

(Il. 79-85. Kathai. 28)

The most significant fact here is that the vanguard, as it emerged out of the capital city of Vanchi is said to touch on the edge or fringe of its wing the white (foam) crested sea-waves. This leaves no doubt whatever as to the proximity of the beach to the fort gate of the city of Vanchi. Pandit M. Raghava Iyengar in his biography of Chera Chenguttuvan contends that his Vanchi was the inland Karūr near Trichinopoly. It is this very Chenguttuvan's and his army's march from the capital Vanchi that is described in the above quoted lines of that king's brother, Ilango, in Chilappadikaram which conclusively affirm that the city's gate abutted the breakers on the sea-beach. This epic poem of Ilango

is of the first or of the second century A.D. at the latest.

(iv) And as if this were not enough, the author of Chilappadikaram reiterates the closest proximity or connection of the old Chera royal city of Vanchi to the sea coast in another context. In speaking of the triumphal return of his royal brother Chenguttuvan to his capital after his victorious north Indian expeditions, the poet refers with exquisite refinement and delicacy to the sorrowing queen of his brother, pining alone in her bed chamber with anguish for the long separation from her loving loved husband, in lines that are of perennial beauty and sweet pathos. Her drooping spirit is said to revive at listening from her bed in the royal chambers to the full-throated and joyous outbursts of cheering of the men and women of Vanchi at the approach of their victorious king to his royal city. In this connection it is expressly mentioned that women sporting under the Punnai trees and on sand heaps on the sea beach joined in the cheering reception to the king, and their shouts were also distinctly heard by the queen from her bed chamber in the palace. The following are the lines of Ilango in this context :-

“குடதிசை யானுங் கொற்ற வேங்கள்
வடதிசைத் தும்பை வாகையொடு முடித்துத்
தென்றிசைப் பெயர்ந்த வென் றித் தாணையொடு
நிதிதுஞ்சு வியனகர் நீடுநீலை நிவந்து

.....
பாட்டொடு தொடுத்துப் பல்யாண்டு வாழ்த்து,

.....
தண்ணம் பொருதை யாடுந ரிட்ட
வண்ணமுஞ் சுண்ணமு மலரும் பரந்து

விண்ணுறை விற்போல் விளங்கிய பெருந்துறை

.....
குறுகலர் தாலழக் கோட்டுமிசை யிருந்து

“வில்லவன் வந்தான், வியன்பே ரிமயத்துப்
பல்லா னிரையொடு படர்குவிர் நீர்” எனக்
காவல னானிரை நீர்த்துறை படிஇக்
கோவல ருதுங் குழலின் பாணியும்
வெண்டிறை பொருத வேலை வாலுக்கத்துக்
கண்ணீ ரடைகரைக் குவையீரும் புண்ண
வலம்புரி யின்ற நலம்புரி முத்தம்
கழங்காடு மகளி ரோதை யாயத்து
வழங்குதொடி முன்கை மலர வேந்தி

“வானவன் வந்தான், வளரிள வனமுலை
தோணல முணீஇய தும்பை போந்தையொடு
வஞ்சி பாடுதும், மடவீர் யாமெனும்
அஞ்சொற் களவி யாந்தம் பாணியும்
ஓர்த்துட னிருந்த கோடுபெருந் தேவி
வாக்வளை செழிய, வலம்புரி வலனெழ
மாலைவெண் குடைக்கீழ் வாகைச் செவ்வியன்’
வேக யானையின் மீமிசைப் பொலிந்து
குஞ்சர வொழுக்கையிற் கோனக ரெதிர்கொள
வஞ்சியுட் டிருந்தனன் செங்குட் டுவனென்”

The gist of these exquisite lines is this :— The victorious king, ruler of Kudathisai, *i.e.*, the Western regions, at the end of his successful campaign in the north, returned with his army southward. At their approach, people in different parts of his city, sighting his triumphal return, cheered him with shouts of greetings. The shepherds on the outskirts as they were driving their cattle homeward greeted the king and his army

with the music of their tuneful flutes. At the sea-beach on sand heaps lashed by the white foamed waves, and under the Punnai trees were women sporting and amusing themselves; and when they saw the approach of the royal corte they all greeted the king in their sweet musical voice, and with songs in praise of his valour. The great queen was listening as she was, to all these sudden outbursts of cheerful greetings; and in her very joy, revived sufficiently in spirit and strength as almost to feel her bangles, which loosened during her pining months, now grip her wrist which seemed to swell and pulse with radiant buoyancy. And the king riding his royal elephant entered the city of Vanchi with conches blowing, and amidst cheers of all the citizens that crowded to offer him a rousing reception.

Thus here once more we have confirmation by king Chenguttuvan's brother, of his previous description of the sea-front of the city of Vanchi at the triumphal re-entry of the royal corte, as at the auspicious starting of the army of expedition.

v. “கடலொலி கொண்டு செழுநகர் நடுவண்”—

In the heart of the opulent city with boisterous breakers roaring around (1. 12 of Stz. 21 of Pathiruppattu)

This line obviously refers to the capital of the Chera king, Palyanai Chelkezhut Kuttuvan, the junior uncle of Chenguttuvan and the hero of canto 3 of Pathiruppattu.

vi. “கடலவுங் கல்லவும் யாற்றவும் பிறவும்
வளம்பல நிகழ்தரு நனந்தலை நன்னாட்டு
விழுவறு பறியா முழவிமிழ் முதூர்.”

(ll. 16—18 of Stz. 15 of Pathiruppattu.)

These lines refer to the ancient city of Ilayavaramban, the hero of the second canto of Pathiruppattu. He is said to be the father of Chenguttuvan, and the ruler of Vanchi by Pandit Raghava Iyengar in his biography of Chenguttuvan. I maintain that Ilayavaramban and his junior brother Palyanaichelkezhututtuvan were maternal uncles to Chenguttuvan. Whether Ilayavaramban was the father or uncle of Chenguttuvan will be discussed in part III of this thesis. But whatever their relationship may be, I agree with the Pandit that the capital of Ilayavaramban and of Chenguttuvan was Vanchi. And these lines of Stanza 15 refer only to this Vanchi as all the ten Stanzas of the second canto *i.e.*, from Stanza 11 to Stanza 20, are only panegyrics of king Ilayavaramban. And these lines unmistakably refer to the marine and commercial wealth of this ancient city of Vanchi.

vii. “அளந்து கடையறியா அருங்கலஞ் சுமந்து
வளந்தலை மயங்கிய வஞ்சி முற்றத்து”

(Il 33—34 of *Kathchi Kadai, Chilap.*)

Here the Chera Chenguttuvan's city is referred to as Vanchimurram. And it is described as “having a number of ships overlooking the city and laden with rich commodities of immeasurable value.”

viii. In another context, this wealth of sea-borne-trade of Vanchi is again spoken of in Chilappadikaram as follows :—

“கடல்சேர் கடனல் குடபுலத்தே”

“வஞ்சியாம்.....

முழங்கு நீர்வேலி மூதூரில்

..... இரங்கும்

பவ்வத்து நன்கல வெறுக்கை துஞ்சும்”

The gist of the lines is this :— “The ancient city of Vanchi has a nosiy sea-bourn, in the Kudapulam or western region abutting groves-ridden seacoast; and in the wailing sea abutting the city wealth-laden ships would be riding at anchor.”

Many more references may be quoted. But they would be superfluous in view of the fact that the extracts cited above definitely and decisively set this question at rest, and establish that the ancient Chera capital “Vanchi” was actually abutting the Arabian Sea. And on all the evidences discussed in this part of the thesis, it would now be abundantly clear that the Tamil classics give us convincing proofs for positive conclusions as to the identity of the old Chera kingdom and its ancient capital Vanchi. We found we have incontrovertible evidences and irrefutable proofs to show that the ancient Chera kingdom was only “Malainad” in the Kudapulam *i.e.*, the territories between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea, and that it did not comprise any part of the regions of Kongunad east of the ghats. We also found enough materials to conclude that the ancient Chera capital Vanchi could not be the inland Karur near Trichinopoly, but must be the famous coastal city at the mouth of the Periyar or Porunai, with a natural harbour; and the harbour was known as Musiri in times of yore, and as Mahodai in later periods. Whereas the inner city with the royal quarters, bazaars and fort was known as Vanchimurram in the classic age, and Thiruvanjaikalam in later times. The modern name of this old city is Kodungolur or Cranganore.

Navalar-Kanakkayar-Doctor S. Somasundara Bharathiar's
works :

ENGLISH

Thiruvalluvar

The System of succession in the Cherakingdom

Some Studies about the Cheras of Yore

The Papers of Navalar Somasundara Bharathiar (ed. by
S. Sambasivan, M.A.)

TAMIL

திருவள்ளுவர்

சேரர் தாயமுறையும் சேரர் பேருரும்

தசரதன் குறையும் கைகேயி நிறையும்

மாரி வாயில்

மங்கலக் குறிச்சிப் பொங்கல் நிகழ்ச்சி

தொல்காப்பியர் பொருட்படலப் புத்துரை-அகத்திணையியல்

ஷெ —புறத்திணையியல்

ஷெ —மெய்ப்பாட்டியல்

தமிழும் தமிழரும் (கட்டுரைத் தொகுப்பு)

அழகு (ஷெ)